

# Creepers of Compassion



Sri Maha Periyava's Views on  
Code for Women

Sri. Ra.Ganapati

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## Publisher's Note

Humble pranams to the readers!

This book contains Sri Maha Periyava's views on code for women. The contents of this book were collected by Sri. Ra. Ganapati, whom we reverently call Anna, for the seventh volume of 'Deivattin Kural' (a compilation of Maha Periyava's speeches). For some reason, this portion happened to be left out in that volume. It was due to Divine Will that I published this part as a separate book in Tamil.

Due to my circumstances, I did not make any effort to sell the book. Most people did not even know that such a book had been published. However, a few newspapers carried reviews. Following this a few devotees came to know about the publication, came to my house and bought copies. Around 100 copies were sold this way. A few devotees took steps in several other ways with great interest and about 400 copies were sold. The rest of the copies with me were voluntarily bought by two other devotees.

After this, I had no great desire to reprint the book. For, selling the copies posed a big question. But, I could not forget this book easily. The contents of this book are such that they made a great impact on me. The views expressed by Periyava in this book – especially that about terrorism – influenced my thinking greatly.

In addition to all other reasons and of paramount importance was the emotional response this book had generated. The letters written by the devotees who had read this book and the efforts taken by some to promote the sale of the book made a great impact on my mind.

Under these circumstances, I re-published this book following the request of some devotees. Over 12,000 copies have been sold so far—in about two years.

Some devotees requested me to bring out the English version of the book. But I was not willing to do it, because, Anna had a genuine fear about the possible distortions of the original message in a translated version. So, I was not ready to take the risk.

In the meantime, I once gave a complimentary copy of the book to Sri. Visveswaran (son of Manikkodi Chitti). Visveswaran was a language professional who had translated several books. A few days later I received a call from him saying his sister was bedridden due to cancer and he was attending to her in the hospital. As a prayer he had started translating Periyava's book and miraculously his sister showed signs of speedy recovery. How could I say to him at that point of time that I was not for publishing an English version of the book! Again, it was the same Divine Will at work, I understood. Soon after the translation Sri. Visveswaran passed away. Probably this was his last translation.

Sri. Madhusudhanan prepared the typed version of the manuscript.

The title 'Creepers of Compassion' was suggested by Dr. K. Subrahmanyam.

It seemed that Sri. Visveswaran also had a fear about distortions in the translated version. He had taken painstaking efforts to retain the original message as such in the English version. This had resulted in a verbatim translation. The text was too heavy and difficult to comprehend. Sri. R. Sudarsan helped in simplifying the text to render it readable to the common audience. Dr. K. Subrahmanyam, Smt. Padma Srinath helped in editing the translation and the second version was made.

This version was further whetted by Smt. Padma Srinath, Sri. R. Sudarsan, Sri. M.V. Kousshik and Sri. V. Ranganathan and the final version was made. Thus enough care has been taken to make the text as simple as possible – at the same time not deviating from the Tamil version – so that an Indian reader can comprehend the meaning without much difficulty. A detailed 'Glossary' has been given at the end, followed by a 'Notes' section. These two have been added to help foreign readers. Both these sections were checked by Sri. P. N. Sankararaman for correctness.

As explained earlier, this book has influenced my thinking greatly. It has helped me understand what our ancestors have actually meant by the term 'dharma'. It changed my views about family, society, social institutions, economy, democracy, technology, violence and so many such things. So, I believe a reader can better understand the message of the book if he looks at things going on around us and tries to comprehend the possible reasons behind them. For this, I have included some news items in the book. They have been given in separate boxes at appropriate places.

I know, some may not like this approach. Some may even consider it unethical to publish news of rape, rave parties, etc. along with Periyava's message. The fact is that I was induced by a kind of intuitive drive to do so; that was unstoppable. Right from the beginning to the publication of this English edition, nothing has turned out according to my choice. Similarly, I believe, it is only the Divine Will that has made me include such news.

I don't know why His Divine Will chose me to publish both the Tamil and English versions of the book. All I can do is to offer my humble pranams at the Lotus Feet.

- T.Sridharan

Please note:

1. We have tried to maintain the Sanskrit and Tamil terms used by *Periyava* as far as possible so that it is easy for an Indian reader to comprehend the meaning of the text. Also, a brief explanation for each has been given in brackets along with the term.

However, a detailed glossary is also given at the end. The glossary covers all the *italicized* words.

Example:

*stree dharma* (duties of women) – page 7:

(Readers can find a detailed meaning for 'stree dharma' in the 'Glossary' section.)

2. The notes section at the end contains some explanation for certain anecdotes, philosophical terms, etc. Paragraphs containing such terms in the text have been marked with numbers given in superscripts.

Example:

*Sivasakti-Aikyaroopini, Nataraja, Siva Natana Sakshi, Pancha Kritya Paramananda Tandavam....*  
saying something meaningless.<sup>2</sup> – page 19:

(Readers can find a detailed explanation for some of the important terms in the 'Notes' section.)

3. Certain parts of the text have a \* mark. A brief explanation for each of these has been given in the footnote. These are the references and explanations included by *Anna* in the Tamil version.

Example:

*Creepers of Compassion*\* – page 7:

(The explanation by *Anna* has been given in the footnote at the bottom of the same page.)

# Creepers of Compassion\*

What do we – who formulate guidelines on the basis of spiritual texts and traditional injunctions – have to say on *stree dharma* (duties of women)? We say, 'This *dharma* consists of women safeguarding the purity and natural tenderness in womanhood. For achieving this, she not only has to refrain from entering the male domain of seeking employment, position, etc. which are the exclusive preserves of men, but also run the household well with modesty. And she must realise that this is the duty enjoined upon her in birth and this verily would liberate her from the cycles of birth and death. It is this which would provide a woman with real, eternal peace – peace of mind sans restlessness – and a sense of fulfillment.

'In addition to this, her clean administration of the home-front would instill a sense of discipline in the family and keep it intact. Her service as the *grihalakshmi* would evoke unity and cooperation among the members of the family like husband, wife and children and ensure a comfortable life. Once the welfare of the family is achieved, the country consisting of several families would also tow the right path in a disciplined way. For peace and welfare to be attained by an individual, a family and the country, it is essential to follow the idea of all men and women doing justice to the portfolios allotted to them by the *sastras* (religious texts). While the woman takes care of the Home Department (laughs),

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\* A major part of this speech is from a conversation in 1984.

the man has to attend to the External Affairs. Such duties have been meticulously demarcated according to the nature of these genders.'

Different parts, but life is the same

This idea may evoke angry protests from today's protagonists of ultra-modern doctrines. They condemn us that these are all cruelties imposed by the *sastras* written by men: It is a stratagem by male chauvinists to oppress women folk and thwart their attempts to rise as equals of men; there is no such discrimination as men's code and women's code. They say mankind is governed by an equal and uniform code.

But, a calm and relaxed analysis would reveal the truth.

There is no place between men and women for competition or struggle for equality. There is no superiority or a sense of inferiority involved in any activity. Earning through external activity and maintaining the household with it – both are necessary in human life. *Dharma* has allocated these two kinds of activities for the husband and wife. I gave the example of the ministerial portfolios. As a new arrangement in it, the husband is designated as 'income minister' and the wife 'expenditure minister'. Many people do not know about this: *Dharma* has clearly given powers only to the woman when it comes to planning and buying all domestic needs. Man has to work and earn. It is the woman who has to plan suitably to meet all kinds of expenditure and run the household. From this it will be clear that women have neither been oppressed nor been inhibited with respect to individual freedom and authority. Why should there be ideas of superiority and inferiority arising between these two kinds of duties? There is no need to consider the duty of the man in the

external world as superior to that of his female counterpart who is confined to domestic duties. (Laughs.) If his job is external, hers is internal! If that internal job is not derided as 'kitchen craze' but she is looked upon as Domestic Management Executive, everything will become all right. Both will become equal. In fact, we can even say that women enjoy a status which is a bit higher than being equal. How? While man earns a salary at his office, woman does an honorary work. Is there not a greater honour in honorary service than in salaried work? Does it not enjoy a superior status? Moreover, it has no 'conditions' attached to it like a six-hour job, eight-hour job, weekly holiday and so on. It is an honorary job attended to all the time except during one's sleeping hours! Does it not raise it to a much higher level than a mere status of equality?

I just spoke in a lighter vein. There is no scope for equality or inequality in this consideration. Two different but necessary jobs are done by two different genders in accordance with their *swadharma* (natural disposition). That is all. If the lungs and the heart, two different organs, do different yet important functions and make life palpable, where is the question of struggle for equality between them? A woman and a man who are doing their duties according to their natural temperaments, living as natural human beings, enabling their families and country to thrive, is similar to this.

### Individual nature and disposition

I used the term *swadharma*, that is 'to follow one's natural disposition'. Thereby, every *jiva* (living being) and every section of the human society would achieve fullness in that particular stage and get elevated to the next stage. Here, the point under consideration is about the two classes, namely men and women. Generally in the case of women, the path that helps them attain

perfection, thereby contributing to the perfection of the world is called *stree swadharma* or *stree dharma*, the natural disposition of woman.

The diversity in creation is bewildering. Today humanity boasts that it is at the zenith of creation due to its superior intelligence! But, in all the inanimate and the sentient it is only this super intelligent man who gropes without knowing his own *swabhava* (natural qualities) and *swadharma* (individual duties). Instead he exults, not realising that it is a struggle. The fact that *Arjuna* was unaware of his *swadharma* (duties) and that God Himself had to instruct (*upadesa*) him about the same was only a personification of this. The same God has delivered through *rishis*, the exponents of *sastras*, the same *upadesa* to all people. These laws deal with the duties of people in general, and also with those meant for the respective classes in particular. It is the very same God – who creates an illusion of complete freedom of choice to the individual to deviate from *swadharma* – who has also given the caveats for redemption in the form of the *sastras*. It is only from these *sastras* that we should understand our *swadharma*.<sup>1</sup>

The world gets carried away by ephemeral pleasures of life and deviates from ascribed duties. If this trend continues, it will lead to all-round anarchy and perversity.

In creation there is an orderly system, a *swadharma*, for each clan or group. If a group with a particular *swadharma* adopts a superficial view of the order and imagines discrimination, which leads to a struggle in the name of equality, and attempts to jump across to a different kind of duty, it may look fine in the beginning. But with the passage of time, individual life, family lives and the overall existence of human society will all go awry. A few benefits may appear to accrue in the interim, while the authentic and

eternal fulfillment would have been sacrificed at the altar of transient and short lived gratification.

When women usurp the role of men, thus forsaking their own duties (*swadharma*), which suit their innate nature (*swabhava*), the serious consequences that result out of it are already amply evident. For, the task they have taken upon themselves is not suited to them. As a result of this, women undergo a lot of stress, tension and sickness. It also has its impact on family life. Although they do not express these openly, there is a perceptible decline from the days when the *grihalakshmi* (family woman) was at the centre of things and when the husband and wife led a disciplined and peaceful life well-bonded through love and affection. Whereas now, love has given way to money and power, thereby relegating the family to being a showpiece. When the number of such families increase will not human society go astray too?

### The exalted nature of gentleness

The nature of woman and her corresponding duties are peerless. The feminine nature or the femininity (*streetva*) is the focal point of all the high qualities and virtues. Classifying living beings into various divisions and through distribution of *swabhava* and *swadharma* (natural disposition and individual duties), the Universal Goddess (*Parasakti*) has ensured that *stree dharma* or femininity remains much greater than *pourusha* or masculinity. While toughness is paramount in masculinity, gentleness reigns supreme in femininity.

We refer to livelihood as a struggle. Since struggles become essential in both the household chores of woman as well as in the tasks performed by man in the outer world, strength and toughness become necessary for both the sexes in executing their respective tasks.

## Life or survival?

"I always feel like I'm about to collapse. Since I am physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted – the kids are just irritants, and so is the job. Every day is a giant struggle, and all I can see, for years and years ahead, is more of the same.

"... I'm so tired of feeling like I don't measure up in every aspect of my life. Go to work? Miss time with kids. Work from home? Can't give undivided attention. House dirty, laundry piled up, kids sick. The thread is breaking.

"... My partner is great about sharing tasks. That's not it – it's the finite nature of time and money. And the complete lack of financial security that I guess almost everyone feels – it hangs over me like a cloud."

*(Marxist Left Review - Summer 2014)*

A survey in America shows –

- \* Women's overall level of happiness has decreased compared to what it was 40 years ago – and to men.
- \* The drop occurs regardless of their financial position, marital status, children, age or race.
- \* According to a 2010 'Working Mother' survey, 40 percent of working women drink heavily to cope with stress and 57 percent said they have misused prescription drugs.

*(The Happiness Choice by Marilyn Tam)*

Maybe, this is not about Indian women.

But how many of us are sure that Indian scenario is much different from America's?



The feminine nature or the femininity (streetva) is the focal point of all the high qualities and virtues.

Indeed, a great amount of physical and mental strength is needed to administer a household. In addition to this, woman is bestowed with the greatest fortune of motherhood, which verily is a personification of Supreme Love and Sacrifice. Imagine the amount of strength and stamina required from carrying the child in her womb, to tending to it day and night and feeding with her own blood in the form of milk.

Similarly, man also possesses certain gentle attributes. We often hear people saying: 'Is he a man? He is behaving like an animal.' From this it is clear that even the human being called 'man' has to qualify himself by mixing gentleness with toughness to avoid behaving like a wild animal.

Considering the human state – be it physically or temperamentally – the roughness of the wild disappears and tenderness permeates. In that human race too, this gentleness becomes more complete in woman than in man. That is how *Parasakti* (Goddess) has designed the *prakriti* (Nature). Having fine-tuned living beings She has crowned women as the pinnacle of the human race.

There is hair all over the body of an animal; however that is not the case in man. As far as women are concerned, they do not even have moustaches or beards. Animals are full of brutal power, the male of the human species does not boast of this. However, man is endowed with height, bulk, toughness and possesses biceps, but, the *saukumaryam* (softness), which is not present in him, is found only in the woman's body. Speaking generally, are not men taller than women? Although man's voice is softer than the roar and noises made by wild animals, his gruff voice mellows down into a sweet one, only in woman.

Nature itself has created man and woman with unalterable differences, rendering any attempt to make them equals fruitless. It has made man and woman with their own characteristic physical features, rendering them act in different ways in procreation (*praja-utpatti*), which is the origin of all life on earth. Reinforcing the differences in them, it has created 'androgen' in man and 'estrogen' in woman, thereby ensuring that they behave in distinctly different ways. Not stopping with the body, the distinctiveness influences the mind and attributes too.

A living being is made of a body and its corresponding attribute. It is said that body and mind integrate into a single unit. When we look at the attributes, toughness predominates in man and gentleness in woman.

Animals have no sense of shame. They go about unattired in their natural form. Not so man. In the case of woman, she has shyness aplenty. It has been their nature until they were keen on transgressing their *swadharma*. Even if they happen to hear a slightly indecent word, their faces will go deep red with shame.

### The example of the Supreme Goddess

We speak of *Parasakti* as the repository of all kinds of power. She has been referred to as *Hreemati* (one who is shy) in the *Sahasranama* (1008 names).

There is a great principle inherent in this. When we say 'Women should be modest', some people object to it and ask us, "What you say is contrary to your own *sastras*. The word Sakti (Power) itself is in feminine gender. You also refer to *Maha Sakti*, the in-charge of the manifested universe, as a woman God. All the women are

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\* Durga Saptasati 11.6

## Premenstrual syndrome

Working women encounter many challenges which women of previous generations did not face. Changing life style, work pressure and aspirations have aggravated certain disorders, which were not heard of, among the Indian women. PMS is one of the serious conditions which affect many working women. Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) usually starts up to 14 days before menstruation. Most women feel some mild discomfort before their periods. But with PMS, they may feel so anxious, depressed or uncomfortable that they are unable to cope with at home or at work. Some of the symptoms of PMS are back pain, bloated abdomen, change in appetite, including cravings for certain foods, constipation, spells of crying, depression, hastened heartbeat, irritability, tension or anxiety, tiredness, headache, hot flushes, joint pain, mood swings, malaise, disinterest in sex, tender and swollen breasts, difficulty in concentration, insomnia, swollen hands or feet, wanting to be alone, and weight gain.

(Ezine - September 2014)

## Health disorder

. . . The Assocham survey findings, released ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, reveals that 42 per cent of working women suffer from lifestyle diseases like backache, obesity, depression, diabetes, hyper-tension and heart ailments. Besides, 22 percent of women surveyed suffered from chronic diseases while 14 per cent had acute ailments.

(Press Trust of India, 6 March 2014)

her personifications. You say, *Tava devi bheda: striya: samastaa: sakalaa jagatsu.*\* (O Devi, all women in the world are endowed with various attributes by You alone.) How come you want one with such power to stay subdued?"

Although *Parasakti* is endowed with all the energy, is She not keeping all of them – right from that in the atom to everything else – under control, without exhibiting them externally? Not just that. She is also keeping Herself concealed despite her extensive administration of the universe. Does not the act of concealment imply shyness? Moreover, although She is *Maha Sakti* (Great Energy), She controls all Her energy and remains a woman of great chastity (*maha pativrata*) under the name *Sati* (wife). She finds fulfillment in *Parameswara* (the Supreme God), in whose pacific nature She merges as *Siva Sakti-Aikyaroopini*\* (One who adorns the form of unison of Siva and Sakti). In Chidambaram, where Siva dances as *Nataraja*, She stays as *Siva Natana Sakshi* (a mute witness to the Divine Dance of Siva), thus making Siva represent all Her acts through His dance called *Pancha Kritya Paramananda Tandavam*. Similarly, if women keep all their energy concealed, it would not be wasted. Rather, it will radiate through the male species in a still better way. There is absolutely no doubt about this. Don't think that I am saying something meaningless.<sup>2</sup>

In Vaishnavism, (the religion in which *Mahavishnu* is considered the Supreme God) *Mahavishnu* is described as the *Sakti* (Power) that administers the entire universe. If Sakti is referred to as a woman in *Saktam*, in *Vaishnavam*, *Mahavishnu* is referred to as man. The very term *Purusha* in the *Purushasuktam* (*purusha* = man; *suktam* = Vedic hymn) refers only to Him. In the second

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\* The 999 th name in the Lalita Sahasranama

chapter of the *suktam*, His Power is classified into two and they are described as His spouses. One is *Mahalakshmi* about whom we all know. She is the 'Sri' among *Sridevi* and *Bhoodevi*. The beauty and love that blossom forth externally are the Sri or Lakshmi. The *Purushasuktam* refers to Her only as the second spouse. The *Purushasuktam* forms a part of the Vedas, which are fundamental to our religion. It is considered to be an authoritative *suktam*. In that *suktam*, the primary status has been given to *Hree*, the embodiment of shyness. Shyness, with its internal beauty and love, which is more powerful than what is externally visible, is what is referred to here as *Hree*. It is internal or concealed. That's why the name *Hree* (shyness). Just because She has power, the Goddess does not manifest it. She has chosen to abide by the male God – who is described verily as *purusha* (man) in the *suktam* – and let Him administer the universe.<sup>3</sup>

As there is *pranavam* (om) to the *Parabrahman* (the Supreme), there is an incantation to *Parasakti* too. It is called *Sakti Beejam*. But, even that incantation seems to have shyness as its base. I just said *Hree* means shyness. Verily *Parasakti's mantra swarupam* (form) is made of those letters (*Hree*). As if to reinforce this view, in the *Sahasranama*, the name *Hreemati* (filled with shyness) comes next to the one that expresses the *Sakti Beejam*. Therefore, although it is true that women have the power, they must be modest enough to keep it within wraps, and instead of themselves showing it out, let it radiate through men. That is the implication.<sup>4</sup>

I said that women possess tender qualities, like shyness, in abundance. They would become emotional more quickly than men. Their nature is such that they are prone to get terrified and break down and shed tears.

These are minor aspects; the major ones are very great (*paramottamam*).

## Grihalaksmi

The kind of bonding love that animals lack is present in mankind. Along with it come exemplary qualities like sense of sacrifice, humility, patience, charity, kindness and the like. Of course, they ought to be there. However, as the *swadharma* of the male kind lies in external activities, he has to face considerable encounters in the external world. That's why the *purusha shrushti dharma* (the law of nature for men), instead of softening his nature, has left it a bit coarse and tough!

Notwithstanding the fact that love and affection are essential in life, while interacting and engaging in the matters of the world with people of different temperaments, one has to be judicious with love and affection and use tough stands whenever essential. Man may need 'might' to deal with the situation, essentially called 'manliness'. Whereas when it comes to domestic affairs and administration within one's own family, it is love that should hold sway totally. Discipline and punishments may be present here too; however, instead of leading to enmity, they would be motivated by the noble intention of reforming what is bad. It is precisely this which has been talked about in the *Tirukkural* as love being of help not only in upholding *aram* (what is right) but also in correcting *maram* (what is wrong). Only a woman can lead a life with love as the driving force and also motivate the members of the family live like that. The highest wealth of all virtues – love and the attributes of love such as service with sacrifice, humility, compassion, delicate feelings, simplicity – converge at a point and that point is *streetvam* (femininity). Even if they wish to deviate from the naturally present *swabhava* of femininity due to the desire for freedom (*swechcha*) they can regain the attribute if they show an inclination to do so, and transform the home into a temple of love.<sup>5</sup>



How can the natural fulfillment accrued out of being her own self be attained by women through assuming a totally alien role of man which is so artificial to her?

Now it looks easy to extricate oneself from one's inherent nature. But if one has the will, adherence to one's inherent nature is easier than that. That and that alone shall yield fruitfulness not only to oneself but to others too.

The Vedas bless the bride saying '*Samrajnee bhava* (Be the empress of the home)' and to this day we chant the mantra in marriages. That way, she shall reign as a queen – not through authority, but through love. It is she who is adorned by the term *Grihalakshmi*, whereas the man is not called *Grihavishnu*. For, according to the *dharmastra*s, home is her province. Here, what is impossible for the man's might to accomplish, will be accomplished by her softness. That is her *swadharma*. That is why the *sastras* have clearly notified that domestic tasks belong to her and she belongs to them.

### Women going to work

Running the home and simultaneously taking up an employment will cause a drop in dedication to both. Such a dual responsibility would only result in unbearable strain and eventual suffering. Loss of dedication would mean that neither of the two responsibilities would be satisfactorily carried out. In a hurry to go to office, the domestic chores will be done in an incomplete fashion; similarly, in the haste to return home, she would do an imperfect job in the office, thus there will be failure on both counts. Apart from the defects in work, the woman who causes it due to wrong desire would be inviting a sin. Would not many types of suffering ensue as the wages of such sins?

It is not just that women should seek employment for the reason that domestic administration suffers. Even if one were able to administer the home properly and attend to official chores efficiently, even then it is not desirable. When it comes to

an employment, one has to adjust to many a worldly issue. One has to move with various people and encounter various forces. One may yet be able to accomplish all these well; however, *streetvam* – the feminine nature and the softness, the root of femininity – will definitely get eroded. Women of today may not realise the greatness of this softness. However, wholesome peace and joy experienced by preserving the femininity can never be secured by positions and earnings. How can the natural fulfillment accrued out of being her own self be attained by women through assuming a totally alien role of man which is so artificial to her?

I do accept that there will be considerable number of women amongst housewives who are unaware of such peace and bliss that comes through the adherence of one's own nature. I also accept that, in a way, they too may be deprived of the fulfillment accrued from authentic femininity. Yet that cannot be an excuse for permitting an act, knowing full well that it will surely harm the pursuit of such a fulfillment.

### Decline of health

Ascribing economic considerations to women seeking employment is unacceptable too. Three fourths of her earning are spent on needless luxuries that accompany her earning.

In the guise of promoting a comfortable living, several modern and ultra-modern gadgets are cropping up daily, which remove from the life of human beings even the basic physical work and bodily exertion that is needed, thus rendering them lazy. The manufacturers resort to great publicity to make these totally unnecessary products look very essential and these products fill showrooms everywhere. When women work and earn a lot of money, they tend to buy these needless things and stack them at home.

It was once remarked in a magazine in a humourous vein: Grinding and such work done through bodily exertion gives all-round health to a woman more than any *yogasana* can give. Instead of indulging in such tasks, the woman of today buys gadgets like mixie and grinder. Without moving her hands and body, she gets all the jobs done through these machines. Consequently, there is no physical activity for the body which in turn results in deterioration of health. There is no scope for bodily exertion in office work too. We can even say that many things that harm health will also be gathered there. This is exactly what happens to a woman. Resultantly she goes to a doctor. The doctor suggests physiotherapy. What follows is a series of exercises with a ball and such things that call for physical movement akin to making flour with a grinding stone or grinding in a rotary fashion with a stone mortar (as in idli-batter grinding).

Health issues due to indifference to domestic chores – expenditure due to the purchase of machines – above all, medical expenses – tension caused by having to visit doctors amidst busy schedule both at office and home – nervous disorders, mental stresses and what not? All these triggering an *anartha parampara* (a series of blunders)!

Women of olden days did not shudder from doing domestic tasks. They would indulge themselves enthusiastically in some task or the other. They would crush, sift, produce *vadaham*, *papad* (side-dishes) and the like, thus were involved in some activity or the other. With all the bending, stretching and movement of hands and legs, they used to have a good appetite, ate well, had sufficient sleep and stayed healthy unlike the women of nowadays who roam about with tablets and medicines in hand. Doctors now say that the women of those days squatted to perform *kolam*, cleaned

## Where does human race head to?

According to reports by the Guardian, Facebook and Apple will foot the bill for employees, who want to freeze their eggs. This is great news for women, who plan to delay pregnancies in the interest of their careers, but it does not stop the biological clock nor reduce the complications associated with pregnancies in older women.

*India.com (31 December 2014)*

## What can the governments do?

... an official report has said the rate at which new jobs were added to India's labour force had declined between 1993 and 2005 despite an economic boom. The annual growth rate of employment declined to 1.85 percent from 2.03 percent between 1993 and 2005 despite higher aggregate growth, said the report released here by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector.

... Unemployment rate in India is showing an increasing trend since 2011 when it was 3.5%. The same rose to 3.6% in 2012 and climbed to 3.7% last year.

... This year, jobless rate is expected to rise to 3.8%, according to the report 'Global Employment Trends 2014'.

... According to the ILO report, it has been argued that India was experiencing 'jobless growth' due to the fact that total employment grew by only 1.1 million from 2004/05 to 2009/10 (based on the National Sample Survey), representing an employment elasticity of almost zero.

*(Times of India, 26 Jan. 2014)*

the place using cow-dung after every meal and performed such physical activities, which ultimately saved them from cesarean and ensured normal delivery.<sup>6</sup>

Now, with the advent of eating at a dining table, cleaning the floor with cow-dung that involved bending of the body is gone. Also, several unhygienic and unhealthy practices have crept in. Cleansing with cow-dung has bidden goodbye to the ground at the entrance, kitchen floor and eating place. With that, is gone the concept of *madi* (the ritualistic purity); and the medicine, beyond compare, for anti-pollution. Even the scientists of Russia speak highly of the germicidal properties of *gomaya* (cow-dung). This does not suit the tastes of today's fashionable ladies.<sup>7</sup>

A western dietician has stated that dining on tables is not suitable for partaking desi cuisine. Seated in chairs with legs suspended and eating desi food – especially the South Indian food – will not help digestion. He has further stated that squatting on the floor – with legs bent and in a pose that gives a slight upward pressure – would aid in the digestion of such type of food. It is the cross-legged posture for men and one leg folded along the floor and the other upright for women which would be our tradition. The hand should not enclose the leg that is kept perpendicular, as that signifies *Moodevi* (Goddess of Inauspiciousness). The hand ought to be inside this leg and this is verily *Sri*, the Goddess of Auspiciousness.

### Simple means, fuller life

I was mentioning about how machines are robbing the necessary physical work of women and how they rob them of their money too.

As products are flooding the markets every now and then, what has been bought this year becomes obsolete the next year and hence we are compelled to go in for newer models. The less said about expenditure on clothes, the better. Women seem to be piling up dresses in their cupboards beyond limit.

The decay of the sublime principle of 'Simple means, fuller life' has disappeared and that is ruining our family and societal lives. In spite of all these materials for our comfort and luxury, we still remain dissatisfied and unhappy; this attitude has to make way for the age-old ideal of contentment, which can be achieved by leading a simple way of life. Husband's salary alone is enough for maintaining the family. One needs to live a frugal life and avoid luxury and extravagance. During every instance we should ask ourselves, 'Can I not live without this?' In this way, if we were to reduce our dependence upon the objects of luxury, then it will not be necessary for us to send women for employment citing economic reasons.

### Unemployment problem

We need to address another looming economic problem that arises out of women taking up employment. I am pertinently referring to the misery faced by the male population due to unemployment. All along my ninety years of life – right from the beginning to this date – I have been observing that the unemployment problem has been chronic. Newer and newer government offices, companies, industries and such other institutions are springing up everyday, thus generating lakhs of jobs; in spite of all these, as the population too is galloping, all these vacancies that are being generated get filled up and many more lakhs of men folk still languish without jobs. At the same time, lots of women are taking up jobs. Posts like 'receptionist' have been exclusively set aside for women.

Women alone should take a neutral stand and consider it from the righteous point of view. Not only righteous point of view, but also with a spirit of sacrifice, which comes so naturally to them. They should ask themselves, "What is the need to capture men's places at offices, thus making them sit at home?" 'Job is the characteristic of man' goes the saying (*udyogam purusha lakshanam*). Women should consider how a lot of men suffer from want of livelihood as women are attempting to change the saying to 'Job is the characteristic woman' (*udyogam stree lakshanam*)!

### Fundamental to life

If a woman desires to perform all the tasks of the home with sincerity and patience, then she has to get rid of the idea of seeking employment, and dedicate the major portion of the day to performing domestic duties. Those women who go to office do not find time to prepare snacks and savories. They buy the same from hotels. And this involves wasteful expenditure. Moreover, it is unhygienic as well as *anacharam* (against the customs of the family).

Beyond all these, what gives satisfaction to a woman is the fact that she is able to feed the members of the family with dishes that she has made with her own hands out of love – not only snacks and other eatables, but the daily cooking too. It is noble and life-giving. Ancient Tamil literary classic *Manimekhalai* says, '*undi koduthor, uyir koduthorae*' (Those who give food, give life, verily). Although the man earns and buys the provisions to make food, it is only due to the work of his wife that they are turned into food that fills the stomachs of all members of the family. It is only the woman who prepares the kind of food prescribed by the *sastras* as being good for both body and mind. She prepares them in such a way as to appeal to the tongue too. Thus, the privilege of nourishing both

## Relationships or contracts?

Indian economy functions more on relations, less on contracts. That is why 60 percent of the farm produce is socially shared. The trades in the rest are based on neighbourhood relations. When contracts replace human relations, it does not lead to 'market economy' but to 'market society', where even families function on contracts. Unbridled market first dismantles the relation-based society, then disturbs families, to yield a purely contract-based 'market society' finally.



... The US is forced to spend more on the welfare of senior citizens, abandoned by their children, and fragmented families with single parents. This puts the onus of welfare of senior citizens on the government. However, in India, it is the families – not politicians or educational institutions – that are responsible for fostering such values.

... Now, some 210 million Americans use about 1.2 billion credit and retail cards, that is, some six cards for every individual. Effect: consumption debt, most of it on credit cards, has risen steeply. The Americans think of their own lifetimes whereas the Asians think of the next generation and, hence, save for the future.

- *S. Gurumurti (Swadesi Jagaran Manch)*

the body and the mind in an integrated manner belongs only to the woman.<sup>8</sup>

Having cooked the food well, witnessing her beloved husband, own children, respectable elders at home eat the food with relish, yields an *atma trupti*, soul-satisfaction, ('job satisfaction'?) which cannot be experienced by any working man, be he even a managing director. During my childhood days I have often observed, whenever women met together, they invariably spoke about the food they cooked that day. On subsequent enquiries, I come to understand that even today it remains the most important topic of discussion for women. What an immense satisfaction a woman gets by feeding her family with care and speaking about that to others! What a great satisfaction she gets out of talking about the act of constantly and carefully filling up the stomachs! After all, it is an act of giving life! This life-giving act should not be harmed by hurried cooking, citing office-work and the like as reasons for the haste.

She may not go to office, but her husband may be in a hurry to go to office and her children may be rushed to leave for school in the morning. This might lead to a hurried meal. In such a circumstance, if she also goes to work and returns home by late evening, even the dinner would be done in a hurry. Or, it would mean partaking of the morning food preserved in the refrigerator, which is harmful to health as well as *anacharam*. Such things won't do. It is freshly cooked food that would be scripturally perfect (*achara*) and healthy too. For this huge task of feeding the family properly at night at least, it is better if women do not go for employment.

Scriptures say that cooked solid food must be consumed before nine at night. After that only items like milk, porridge, fruits, etc.



Nothing is more important  
to a woman than her obligation  
towards her husband, children and  
husband's parents.

can be taken. Nowadays, by the time women return home after a tiring day's work, it is already dark. They need to rest a while as a result of fatigue. In the name of relaxing, they feel like watching TV. I hear that the scenes appearing on the TV tense up the nerves instead of relaxing them. Falsely believing that this is relaxation and unable to take their eyes off the TV due to temptation, and after some time when the cooking is done in a most disinterested way, time is already late. By then the children would be terribly hungry and in order that they do not feel hunger they are fed with all sorts of snacks bought from the shop, which results in unnecessary expenditure on the one hand, diseases on the other hand. This is the *griha dharma* (household management) followed by the working women of today, as far as I understand.

This trend should not continue. Women ought not to squander away the *varaprasada* (blessing) which has been bestowed upon them. Nothing is more important to a woman than her obligation towards her husband, children and husband's parents.

### The mother-in-law

I was mentioning about the parents of the husband. Until recently the mother-in-law was an unwanted person; but, now she is much sought after. However, the biggest worry is that this is not any positive turn of events. She is after all required to look after the children when the daughter-in-law goes to office. Children under the care of mother-in-law means less problems and less expenditure as opposed to baby sitting or creche. Hence mothers-in-law are welcomed with both hands, the motive being ulterior. When women undertake employment, everyone feels proud and since it is generally felt that it is essential to go for a job, the mother-in-law also takes up the job of looking after the children readily and with relish.

Due to old age and infirmity their bodies may not cooperate and they may be yearning for rest. However, as they also support the current trend, they shoulder the responsibility albeit half-heartedly and with difficulty. The children too, take more liberty with the grandmother than with their mother. Of course, lack of fear makes the kids give trouble. The old women suffer these, yet continue to go ahead. Even though they agree to this, causing such a situation is not at all justifiable. It is both *dharma* and just that in their infirm age, the son and the daughter-in-law serve them and comfort them. At this age, the daughter-in-law should assume all the domestic responsibilities and expect only small assistance from the mother-in-law. On the contrary, if they pass on their responsibilities to the elderly people and extract work from them, then that is a big sin.

### Feeding the soul

I was mentioning that even if a woman remains a housewife, and, if she has to prepare food in a hurry in the morning – as the husband and children have to leave in a hurry – she has to compensate for this hurry at least in the night by cooking proper food.

Whatever happens to be the morning food, when the children return from school in the evening, the mother has to prepare a variety of new food items with her own hands and serve them with love. Seeing the joy of the young souls should fill her heart with delight. After this, she has to light the lamp, spend some time in *stotra, parayana* (prayers) and start preparing dinner.

When the husband returns home, she has to encourage him to perform *sandhya vandanam* (daily prayers) or any other worship meant for him. This is also an important task, which our women had been performing beautifully until recently. When many of our men folk, lured by the western thinking, transgressed from the

path of our religion, it was only the women folk, who, after repeated pestering, have turned men towards our religion at least to some extent.

In many households, the rites and rituals like *amavasya tarpanam* (homage to the departed forefathers on every new moon day), *sraddham* (death anniversary of the parents), *upanayanam* (sacred-thread ceremony for the son), *prarthana* (supplication) and the like are being undertaken by men only because of the compulsion exerted by women. Apart from nourishing the body, women should ever continue to do this supremely noble act of nourishing the soul too.<sup>9</sup>

After the husband finishes his worship, all members of the family can visit a nearby temple casually enjoying the breeze. After all, there is a Vinayaka temple in every corner. Such a daily visit to some temple is a wonderful tonic for the mind. And I desire that it is the woman who should prescribe this mind-tonic to the family.

On return, they have to take dinner. After dinner let them spend a little time – I repeat, a little time only – before television for entertaining themselves with song and dance. In any case everyone should retire to bed before 9.30 or 10 at night. Only then, they can get up early in the morning at *pancha pancha ushah kalam* (before sunrise). Nowadays it seems that everything has turned upside down. The strain arising out of watching television till late night – as the programs go on until 11 pm \* – the stress due to attending office, all these join together and as a result, women are asleep in bed blissfully unaware of sunrise. In the olden days, women used to get up well before dawn, clean the doorway and

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\* This was stated before the advent of multi channels and cable TV which telecast programs all the twenty four hours of a day.

## What do we need - life or career?

"I don't think women can have it all. I just don't think so. We pretend we have it all. We pretend we can have it all," said 58-year-old Ms Nooyi.

Ms Nooyi said she has died "with guilt" several times as she tried to bring up her two daughters with her husband of 34 years. She recounted that she felt guilty for not being able to attend several activities at her daughters' school as she could not take time off from work.

She talked about support systems that career women have to build. "...every day you have to make a decision about whether you are going to be a wife or a mother, in fact many times during the day you have to make those decisions. And you have to co-opt a lot of people to help you. We co-opted our families to help us. We plan our lives meticulously so we can be decent parents. But if you ask our daughters, I'm not sure they will say that I've been a good mom. I'm not sure. And I try all kinds of coping mechanisms," she said.

"My observation is that the biological clock and the career clock are in total conflict with each other. Total, complete conflict. When you have to have kids you have to build your career. Just as you're rising to middle management your kids need you because they're teenagers, they need you for their teenage years."

She added: "And that's the time your husband becomes a teenager too, so he needs you. They need you too. What do you do? And as you grow even more, your parents need you because they're aging. So we're screwed. We have... no... we cannot have it all."

Ms Nooyi is the fifth CEO in PepsiCo's 44-year history. She recounted the day 14 years ago when she was told that she would be made president of PepsiCo and be named to the board of directors.

She said she was "overwhelmed" but her mother's reaction was, she said, "Let the news wait. Can you go out and get some milk?"

Ms Nooyi recalled her mother telling her, "Let me explain something to you. You might be president of PepsiCo. You might be on the board of directors. But when you enter this house, you're the wife, you're the daughter, you're the daughter-in-law, you're the mother. You're all of that. Nobody else can take that place. So leave that damned crown in the garage. And don't bring it into the house."

"You know I've never seen that crown," the corporate honcho said.

(NDTV, July 03, 2014)



decorate it with *kolam*. This not only beautified the *griha* (house), but also made the *grihini* (housewife) healthy and equipped her with a clear mind. It is painful to see that such practices have disappeared. It is all the more distressing to see everyone chasing wealth, position and such petty material benefits and thereby squandering not only the true wealth – the happiness of the soul – but also the well-being of the body. It is the belief that things have not gone totally out of control that makes me talk about the good things advocated by the *sastras*. Such 'blabbering' is the result of the hope that at least one in a thousand, ten thousand or a lakh may heed to the counsel, which itself is beneficial.

Two exceptions: teaching and health care

Knowing well that I do not subscribe to women taking up employment, some people have been seeking my clarification on a particular point.

When I say 'I do not subscribe', it should not be considered as my personal viewpoint: that I support or not support something on my own. I have no right to stamp my opinion in any form whatsoever. There is no room for that. Whatever is contained in the *sastras*, (scriptures) and whatever is the opinion of *sishtas* (the followers of the *sastras*), I am duty bound to state that and that alone. As a judge does not have any individual likes or dislikes and delivers a judgment based on law books and precedents, so too the people occupying the *dharma-peethas* (religious institutions) have to necessarily base their views on scriptures like law manuals, and also the customs of those devout who strictly follow the *sastric* injunctions. The opinion that women ought to eschew the desire of seeking employment is also of a similar nature – that is, based on what I could infer from these.

Some people have made a suggestion about this: 'Would it not be apt that girl students are taught by women teachers? Would it not safeguard them by avoiding the scope for any untoward incidents? In the same way, is it not ideal for women to be treated only by lady doctors? Hence you must permit them to be employed in just these fields' they stated to me. Their argument is not unjustified.

Having said that, I wish to add that women going to teach or to provide medical treatment ought not to either satisfy their desire for a job or to make money out of it. If they could be allowed to undertake these jobs with such ideals in mind, then, engaging in other jobs in offices, companies, etc. gets due sanction too, by the same token. What we have been stating all along is against this very practice, is it not?

Hence, the motivating factor for women to take up these two kinds of jobs ought to be altogether different. These jobs have to be viewed with a spirit of service alone, that is, to share knowledge with those of their ilk and to cure disease. Discarding the intention of considering such profession as 'employment' they must nurture the thirst to serve and make it their only motivating factor.

Others around her can never gauge, assess or implement this. Only the women concerned have to determine this within themselves: "Is my motive pride and money or a means of serving fellow-women? If the former is the reason, it is not fair to take up the job. The latter is a sound reason." This they must do with *easwara-sakshi* (God-conscience). They must weigh the issue thoroughly and decide. Whether they will do so or not is a different matter.<sup>10</sup>

I feel there is a second reason that provides motivation to women taking up such professions where women serving women will be the proper thing. That is poverty. Women belonging to families

We hear such news every now and then

... The incident took place at around 0145 hrs on Tuesday when the women, along with their male friends, were heading towards Juhu beach from a hotel in the suburbs.

A mob of 70-80 men reportedly tore up the women's clothes, molested and groped them while their male companions, overpowered by the crowd, watched helplessly...

A similar incident had happened exactly a year ago, when a girl was molested by New Year revellers at the Gateway of India.

(*Rediff, January 02, 2008*)

Six men have been arrested for allegedly harassing a group of five women at MG Road in Bengaluru. Three of them are from Tamil Nadu and other three are from Bengaluru itself. The men were caught on camera allegedly harassing the women on late Saturday night.

(*CNN-IBN, 25 Nov 2014*)

In a first of kind, Hyderabad Police has set up 100 special teams to check harassment of women in public places. These teams are called SHE teams and are aimed to counter eve teasing, stalking, physical harassment at public places.

(*CNN-IBN, 11 November 2014*)

(Be it in India or elsewhere, it is customary for the 'know-all's' to attribute such violence against women to male-chauvinism. For how many more years are we going to deceive ourselves with such half-baked theories?)

that reel under abject poverty, can opt for either teaching or medicine instead of other employment.

Those who do not need to take up these jobs for economic reasons should spend a major portion of their income on charity.

### Women with extraordinary talent

Whatever be the rule, there will be an inevitable exception. It is said every rule has its exception. Thus, time and again, women of extraordinary talent have been appearing like exceptions. They had not just been confined to the home, but had won renown in the external world also, by developing their talent. The society too had permitted these extraordinarily talented women to hone their talents and develop them. After they had developed these talents, it encouraged them to be of service to society in their respective fields. Society did not shackle them at home at all.

In this country where women have been housewives from time immemorial, there yet have been a number of women from time to time, in every region of the country, who have been experts in various branches of life. Many such women have shone invariably in all fields such as knowledge, devotion, literature, governance, warfare, fine arts like song and dance. Their names have been etched in the pages of history. Similarly, even today, if such exceptional women come to the fore, then it is not wrong to let them shine in the external world. However, if those majority of women, who are duty-bound to follow the injunctions, desire to follow the path of exceptions, then would not the society and the family be spoilt?

### Unity sought for

How should a *grihini*, who is at home, spend her afternoons? After all, she will have enough time even after a brief rest.

During such times, she can prepare home needs like snacks, food-powders, pickles and the like. That it ensures bodily health due to physical exertions is just one aspect. But the major part is the inner satisfaction – resulting from catering to the needs of one's husband and kids – which ensures mental health.

They may also do another thing that would benefit the mind directly. I would say they ought to do it. In our country, there are innumerable religious works in Tamil and Samskritam. Apart from these, there are numerous literary epics which are not strictly religious. Today, the men folk who are running mad behind their professions do not find time to delve into these. Instead of copying what men do, women should achieve what men folk are unable to do.

They can read religious scriptures in Tamil or *Samskritam* or in both, like the *puranas* (mythology), *stotras* (verses), the biographies of saints, *upadesas* (teachings) and the like that appeal to the mind and heart. They can recite those works that require *parayana* (reading, reciting). The taste for these is bound to increase, and never will it be a cloying experience. Instead of doing it alone, if it is done in association with, say four other companions, it gives as much pleasure as sharing and eating together with the near and dear. Women must come together for the uplift of one's self and protection of *dharma*, thus proving untrue the common notion that women come together only to indulge in gossip.

If the *grihini*, who is extolled as *illaththarasi* (the queen of the house), is awakened in terms of *atman* (the Self) and *dharma*, then that is adequate. As the lamp that is lit in the yard sheds its light to the hall, verandah and the entire home, her radiation itself would cleanse everybody else in the household.

In addition to reading religious books, it is only the grihinis who can procedurally practise the *vratas* (vows, fasting) as prescribed in those texts. Simultaneously juggling between office work and observing the *vratas* would end up in making many compromises. Even if they begin doing them uncompromisingly, the work-related stress and the strict rules of *upavasa* (fasting), all combine to create strain in the person. Instead, to obtain *sreyas* (eternal benefits), it is ideal to be confined to the home so that one can observe the *vratas* without weariness.

The very same house which aids in observing the *vratas*, is also the place where one should not observe them on certain days. I am talking about the days of menstruation. Now, when women go to office on those three days, the *theettu* (pollution arising out of menstruation) spreads throughout the place. These days people are warned against 'atmospheric pollution' quoting various causes and are asked to take remedial measures against them. *Theettu* is far more dangerous than all such pollutions. Because the harm it does is not externally visible, nobody pays any attention to it. Even those who take cognizance of this pollution are dismissed as orthodox-eccentrics. In reality, this pollution will attract inauspicious forces. If it is permitted to freely mix in all places, whatever be the money that people earn, whatever 5 year plans the government implements, poverty, quarrel and disease will be rife in the country forever.<sup>11</sup>

We shall now return to the topic we were discussing earlier: Forming small groups and reading religious texts. Not only religious books, many *kavyas* (epics), dramas and stories are also there. One can find so much aesthetics in these classical books. They give unblemished happiness to life, while at the same time enriching the heart and intellect. They do not belong to the drier category of *upadesa* (teaching / advice), but are something full of

These are not 'orthodox buffs' like Periyava

Social media and suicide have important relationships. In one widely known case, the death of Phoebe Prince, it is generally believed that her actions were motivated by cyberbullying. In 2008 police in the United Kingdom expressed concern that "Internet cults" and the desire for achieving prestige via online memorials may encourage suicides.

Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster, has warned that popular social networking sites lead young people to form "transient relationships" which put them at risk of suicide when they collapse.

One of the rising research questions being asked by psychologists is where kids are getting the idea of suicidal tendencies. One of the explanations that have risen is the cause and effect relationship between social media advertised suicides and younger generations being influenced by them.

There was a research study conducted by the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney, Australia. This study was conducted in order to research whether there is a correlation between suicidal ideation and social media exposure to suicide stories among young adults (14-24). The study concluded that one of the most mentioned sources of suicide stories were social websites. This in mind, there was also a reported rise in feelings of hopelessness and suicidal tendencies among the participants surveyed.

*(Dunlop, More, and Romer 2009)*

life and emotion, which have the capacity to ameliorate us. For example, we may say *Sakuntalam* in *Samskritam* (by *Kalidasa*) and *Chilappadikaram* in Tamil (by *Iango Adigal*). Women can read such books during the afternoon. All these are available now with lucid explanations and it is easy to understand the text. Or else, they may invite well-versed people to conduct classes. Now, aren't there women who conduct classes on *Soundaryalahari* and *Abhirami Antadi*? If we sincerely look for such people, we would be able to find someone to teach other subjects too. All we need to do is to search with passion. Not only shall we get the books, but also the teachers.

The women, who are confined to the home, should not waste their time. The pearl mines of religious and other literature with us should not be wasted too. That is what I have in mind.

#### No to Veda adhyayana<sup>29</sup>

Just as I listed what women should read, I have to also state what women should not read. When I say so, you might expect that I would advise against reading trash or crap. Of course, that is true. However, there is something – which is not trash and crap, but in fact, removes all trash and crap – that women are forbidden to read. I have to say this since *sastras* have enjoined so.

Yes, I am speaking about the Vedas.

There are many books that convey the inner meaning of the Vedas. Let women read and understand them all. However, let them not read the Vedas directly or memorise the *suktas* (Vedic verses) and recite them like men.

If I say so, some people raise strong objections to it. They argue 'If we look at *Veda*, *Upanishad*, *itihasa*, *purana*, etc. we find ample evidences of women being adept in the Vedas! There had been

women who were called *Brahmavadinis* and there had been female *rishis* too, who had even divined *mantras*.<sup>16</sup> It is indeed acceptable that in the earlier *yugas* (times / Eras) there have been instances that may have been exceptions. However, it is not proper to apply them to this *Kali Yuga* (the present Era). Those belonging to this *yuga* are weaklings. To identify what shall be suitable for each individual one has to refer to the *sastras* and act accordingly.<sup>16</sup>

Each individual may have different opinions. Moreover, the opinion one has today may change tomorrow. Hence, it is not appropriate to base a social decision on such frivolous opinions. God has authorised *rishis*, who had discarded their individual identity and were absorbed in the contemplation of Self-Realisation and the welfare of humanity, as the *adhikara purushas* (competent authority) to administer *dharma* (righteousness) through them. He has revealed the tenets of *dharma* (what is right) and *adharma* (what is not) in the form of the *sastras*. The *sastric* injunctions are the ultimate which nobody can dispute. Here, it is not proper to raise questions on the basis of discrimination. How is it possible to bring divine ethics and mystery of God's Creation into the fold of reason? After all, rationalism itself is just one tiny part of Creation.

'Reformers' view things superficially and advocate what appears right to them. As their views come within the ambit of our reasoning, we praise these 'reformers'. On the contrary, *rishis*, who divined the *dharmastras*, delved deep at the inner levels and spoke about the rules that were made known to their insight by God's grace. Rationalism cannot enter those realms. We have no other way than to believe in what they have expressed. And remember, they are fully fit to be the recipients of our total and undiluted faith. What are their attributes? Unlike the 'reformers'

whom we know, they were *rishis*, who possessed extrasensory powers. They were more concerned about the welfare of the world than the reformers of any era. The universal good spoken about by the reformers stops with the world. But the one that the *rishis* divined has the objective of future worlds as well. At the same time they have not ignored this world. It is in order to utilise this world as a means for the eternal benefit that they have laid down the tenets of *dharma*. Thus they have framed rules as to what kind of acts must be done so as to benefit the individual and society.

It is one such rule which states that in *Kali Yuga* (the present Era) women do not have *adhibar* (competence) to read the Vedas.<sup>16</sup>

Why do we read the Vedas? It is because it gives us benefits. However, it is not the Vedas but the scriptures that have codified the rules clearly enough for us to understand. *Smriti* (*dharmastra* – code of ethics) serves as a beacon light to *sruti* (the Vedas). Only through the *dharmastra* we come to know that reading the Vedas is beneficial. When the same *dharmastra* tells us that women, who are by nature physically weak, reciting the Vedas would do more harm than good in this *Kali Yuga*, should we not accept it as it is? It is our duty to follow the do's and refrain from the don'ts as advised by it. How can one insist on reading the *sutra*, transgressing the very rule stipulated by it? Did I not mention earlier that we should not ask for reasons just to satisfy our rationalism but must proceed on the basis of faith? However, in this instance there is a reason that appeals to reason too. Maybe women can accomplish several tasks and achieve feats just like men. However it is definitely not possible for women to recite the *mantras* as majestically with all the high and low pitch intonations emerging from the navel as men do for hours at a stretch. And Vedic incantations would confer full benefit only if

uttered that way. Men would neutralise the strain caused by such recitation by consuming a lot of ghee. Women's digestive system will never sustain that. If, however, women stubbornly try to emulate men by reciting the Vedas in a loud voice, their physical organs like the womb would be gravely affected. Along with such self-inflicted harm, they would bring harm unto the world too – both at the gross and subtle levels. One set of people, by refusing to submit to the *sastras*, would be ample encouragement for other sections of society to violate *sastras, sampradaya* (tradition), laws of the government, laws of institutions and the discipline implemented by the elders.<sup>12 29</sup>

Disobedience is the greatest evil that plagues us these days. Till this trait remains, there would be conflict and strife prevalent universally, as is present today. It is as an antidote to this insubordination that women are required to redeem femininity, as advocated by the *sastras*, which has modesty as its predominant trait. On the contrary, bringing the issue of insubordination to the Vedas themselves is a great sin.

Why the clamour for the right to recite the Vedas?

I do not consider that women decide to recite the Vedas out of sheer devotion to them. If that were true, they would concomitantly have devotion and faith in the *sastras* which preserve the spirit of the Vedas. So, the reason for some people raising the flag of rebellion now is due to their trait of nonconformism – refusal to submit to the laws that till yesterday were obeyed by the people – refusal to submit to the path of discipline on which our grandfathers and fathers travelled. Propelled by one's own whims and fancies, one simply desires to break such a binding and unifying force. This is just an example of the nonconformism that is spread throughout the world today.

On the one hand, man who is enjoined by the *sastras* to do *adhyayana* (recitation) questions as to why he has to do so, and discards it. On the other hand, woman who is not enjoined to do *adhyayana* questions as to why she should not do so. And so asking, she does what is not needed for her to do and what she is not supposed to do as well. Had the same *sastras* permitted women to do *adhyayana*, they would ask the same questions being asked by the men folk of today such as: "Is *Veda adhyayana* so inevitable? Is not *bhakti* (devotion) more than enough? Why not stop with some *namajapa* (chanting the names of God)?"<sup>30</sup>

The essence of the matter here is that women should not enter the jurisdiction of the Vedas directly. It is enough if they learnt the context and meaning of the Vedas.

One may tend to ask, 'All right, let me not indulge in a big way. But may I just recite some hymns like *Durga Suktam*, *Sri Suktam*? If such a trend is allowed, this small lenience may slowly lead to greater obsession in future. It will be similar to a small breach in a dam, which will eventually flood the whole area.'

Vedas are majestic because of their masculinity. Let us leave them to the men folk. The world today has been drastically infected by *adharma* (unrighteousness) and the elixir that is required is the sweetness of woman alone – the gentleness and only the gentleness. May women spread sweetness in the world, reciting Sanskrit *stotras* (hymns in praise of a deity) and Tamil hymns which shower sweetness and gentleness, thus melting the heart. May women make their homes sweeter and sweeter!

### Women and music

Talk about *madhuryam* (sweetness) and *sangeetam* (music) comes to mind. Music is a sublime fine art. It is potent enough to lead one to God's altar easily. Many sages in our country have left



How is it possible to bring divine ethics and mystery of God's Creation into the fold of reason? After all, rationalism itself is just one tiny part of Creation.



Watching too much TV has harmed  
the mental health of a whole generation of children

The survey produced for the Children's Society says that children are part of a new form of consumerism, with under 16 year-olds spending £3 billion of their own money each year on clothes, snacks, music, video games and magazines.

The report claims that some advertisers 'explicitly exploit the mechanism of peer pressure, while painting parents as buffoons' and that in its most extreme form, advertising persuades children that 'you are what you own'.

Television alone is responsible for 10% of youth violence.

*(Leonard Eron, Senior Research Scientist at the University of Michigan)*

"The debate is over... For the last three decades, the one predominant finding in research on mass media is that exposure to media portrayals of violence increases aggressive behavior in children."

*(The American Psychiatric Association)*

A study of 1792 adolescents (aged 12-17) showed that watching sex on TV influences teens to have sex. Youths who watched more sexual content were more likely to initiate intercourse and progress to more advanced noncoital sexual activities in the year following the beginning of the study. Youths in the 90th percentile \* of TV sex viewing had a predicted probability of intercourse initiation that was approximately double that of youths in the 10th percentile. \* Basically, kids with higher exposure to sex on TV were almost twice as likely than kids with lower exposure to initiate sexual intercourse.

(A study by RAND - Pediatrics, September 2004)

\*percentile - a type of statistical measurement based on hundred

10th percentile = the tenth one among hundred persons (or things) when arranged in an ascending order

90th percentile = the ninetieth one among hundred persons (or things) when arranged in an ascending order

Virtually the only healthy marriages on television exist in the past or on fantasy shows. As television critic Jeff Greenfield has noted, 'Marriage on TV today is a cross between a bad joke, a bad dream, and a nostalgia trip. Finding a contemporarily, happily married couple on television is like finding an empty taxi in mid-town Manhattan at 5 p.m. – possible but not very likely. More often than not prime-time TV marriages are troubled with the typical soap opera woes, infidelity, incompatibility, and incurability.'

(*The Care and Feeding of Children* by E.L. Holt, 1903)

Children are more vulnerable to advertising than adults.

Advertisers work with psychologists to develop marketing strategies aimed at children.

(*The Process of Education* by J. Bruner, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press)

Television contributes to young people's fear of violence. A recent survey of a large representative sample of over 3,000 programs aired between 6 a.m. and 11p.m. looked at the amount and type of violence portrayed. The investigators found that violence occurred in a majority of the programs, and often consisted of aggressive acts that went unpunished and that were imbedded in a humorous episode.

(*The Hurried Child* – David Allen)

In the largest drug-use survey\* ever undertaken, 6th through 12th grade children admitted to behavior that would horrify their parents if they knew. Our children are using drugs in ever-increasing numbers and at younger and younger ages. They're popping pills and smoking pot on the school bus, getting drunk in their cars and at their friends' houses and even snorting cocaine in their own homes.

(*Family Circle*, 24 September, 1985)

\* Over 200,000 children were surveyed.



behind a lot of songs for us so that we may tune them to music and sing. Similarly many composers have composed *keertans*, (compositions) in the appropriate *raaga* (tune) and *taala* (rhythm) so as to be learnt by others easily. *Ambal* (Goddess) has graced women with a naturally melodious and sweet voice. Hence, they can practise music during their leisure. Not for the sake of performing in *sabhas*, to seek recognition or fame. It might drag women to competition, ego and unnecessary external manifestations. Instead, they can practise music for the sake of self-fulfillment and to please God. Women may sing during an auspicious event at home, during *Navaratri* and other festivals in order to give happiness to those assembled and at the same time evoke divine thoughts. In functions like marriages and other ceremonies, there has to be fun too. So even humorous songs can be sung. Of course, all such aspects have to be there in life to the required extent. Otherwise, life will be dull, dry and monotonous.<sup>32</sup>

*Ambal* likes the *veena* (a musical instrument). Women, who are considered as Her very embodiment, can learn to play the *veena*. Every Friday evening, they can make an offering of the music on *veena* to Her. One can do the same in temples too. However, if many such people come to make similar offerings there, it might result in competition. There would be a portrait, *yantra* or idol of *Ambal* at home, before which she can play the *veena*, for a short time, say for quarter of an hour or half an hour. One can sing and play simultaneously too. Even if she were to remain focused on this only to a little extent, that would be enough for her to experience the tranquility it carries.<sup>13</sup>

Women staying at home and developing fine arts is ideal. This suits their nature too. Their afternoons should be spent on arts and physical work alone. When physical work is performed in the right spirit, that itself is an expression of art. The spirit that I am

doing things for the sake of my own family, for my own home, is enough to generate an enthusiasm in the physical work and transform it into an art.

If women were to follow what I have enlisted so far, they would start feeling that they do not find adequate time instead of feeling that they find it difficult to pass time at home.

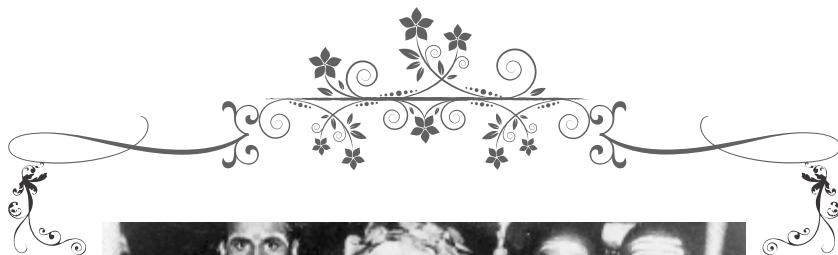
I have stated a few ideas that came to my mind, that would help women to spend their time purposefully at home instead of going to work. The import of my statement is to make their time so purposeful that it not only strengthens their body but also melts the mind in the sweetness of femininity.

### Women, the root of all dharma

Somehow, we have to safeguard the noble qualities and the supreme way of life of *streetvam* (femininity) that have been alive all these thousands of years and ensure that they do not die away, by pumping oxygen into them as much as possible. That is the main task on hand today.

For, *sastras* say, '*stree moolam sarva dharma:*' (Women form the taproot of all moral duties). If they go astray, everything in the world will go astray. There is no great harm if men go astray. The moral strength of women folk would protect and bring them back to the right path. On the contrary, if the woman falls, that will be the fall of society too. Even *Arjuna* laments at the start of the *Gita*: 'Everything will go awry if women go astray.'<sup>1</sup>

One has to lament like this to get the message across that *stree* (woman) should have *streetvam* (femininity), that woman should remain woman. What to do? The fallout of the times! *Kali Purusha*, (the spirit of *Kali Yuga*) has engulfed the minds of everyone and is raging like a storm, which has resulted in all these!<sup>16</sup>



There is no great harm if men go astray.  
The moral strength of women folk would  
protect and bring them back to the right path.  
On the contrary, if the woman falls, that will  
be the fall of society too.

More disastrous effects in times ahead

Competition rears its head where there is no place for it. With man and woman vying with each other to be one up, a big vicious circle is set rolling and sins are multiplying one after the other.

One need not necessarily wish to adopt manliness, but may go to work erroneously thinking in terms of financial betterment alone; as a consequence of this, due to the atmosphere prevalent, aspects of manliness would automatically begin to cling on to the woman without her realising it at all. Gradually, her femininity would get numbed and concomitantly manliness would rise.

Hence the principal rule of *prakriti dharma* (law of Creation) – the state of countering masculine power with feminine gentleness so as to maintain balance and enhance life on earth – will begin to deteriorate. Humility – the elixir to the haughty world of today – will gradually disappear from the midst of women. Haughtiness would start manifesting itself in their very walk, dress and gait.

The disastrous effects of this may not be visible in the beginning and it may appear that a revolution to achieve equality has ensued. But as time progresses, if the whole society consisting of men and women turn haughty and arrogant, the world would turn into a never-ending hell, with both the sexes fighting among themselves like wild animals or demonic races.

Masculinity and femininity are complementary to each other

There is absolutely no rivalry between masculinity and femininity. They have to be complementary to each other; they have to adjust with each other. They should not get mixed into one, lest the forms of both would be lost. These are like the two trays of a balance: balancing each other, while being different.

## The ecology of man-woman

Nowadays, we often come across a science called 'ecology'! What do they suggest in that? They say: "Nature comprises of forest and other lands. There are a variety of flora and fauna. Despite their differences, there is a balancing order in nature which ensures they are in sync. This is a strange balance (scale). That is, it is not a balance that equalises the unequal by negating inequalities, but a balance which creates an order among the inevitable inequalities present. We should not upset this intricate adjustment that Nature – or the *Easwara Niyati* (order that the Almighty has set) that manifests itself as Nature – has developed. We should not disturb it. If we do, Nature would get wild and avenge our acts. Even wild creatures like the tiger and the snake have their place in nature, according to their proportion; and hence one should not eliminate them. In a narrow perspective, assuming what we do is good, if one were to alter this ecological balance, disastrous consequences will follow later on."

It is good that efforts are on to enlighten everyone about this truth and in creating such an awareness.

But nobody seems to take cognizance of a similar situation taking root in the matter of man-woman ecology, which is too subtle, and, when its balance is tampered with, it leads to disastrous effects: Though this disaster largely happens in the subtle realms of the mind, it strictly does not end with that but continues its foray into the gross world till the whole society is transformed into a haughty and arrogant one.

And people like us who notice it at least to a small extent and give a timely warning are slammed as being anti-progressive and conservative. Shedding humility and going ahead adventurously

is what they call 'progressive thinking'. They have given the phrase 'dash and drive' to such a thought. I would only say these people are 'progressing' towards the edge of a cliff that falls into the ravines. And somehow this 'progression' has to be stopped at all costs and only the so-called conservative approach shall save the society from danger. Otherwise these dash and drive people, it appears, would 'drive' along their chosen path and fall off the cliff to be 'dashed' to the ground.

What causes this cruel attitude?

I have been witnessing that if woman snatches manhood from man by upsetting the intricate ecological balance between man and woman, Nature does not watch the happenings mutely. I have been witnessing this very clearly and intently. What I am about to say has been lying deep in my mind for quite some time. If those born as women reduce their gentleness and adopt the hardness of men, the nature of the male species refuses to accept such an equality of man and woman, and men adopt much more hardness. Consequently, demonic wildness rears its head everywhere.

In the present times, we classify species into humans and animals: We say that the animal species in general are tougher and wilder than the humans. In the olden days, there were *asuras*, *rakshasas* (demons), who were as cruel as animals or even more cruel than them, who were also endowed with six senses like human beings. So too, there were *devas* (divine people), who were more gentle than the humans. Even today, these *deva-asura saktis* (divine and demonic forces) are prevalent, though in a more subtle manner. The reason why I am talking about this now is that if woman who is supposed to be less tough in the ecology of human species, instead of being so, begins to adopt the strength of man, is not the

balance disturbed? The race consciousness in the male species, unable to endure this, consequentially becomes more hard, rough and cruel in order to be one up than the female species. That is, the man tries to adopt the nature of an *asura*. If the female of the human species adopts the nature of the male of the human species, then the male adopts the traits of the *asura* species.

There is no ecological balance in the many varieties becoming equal: This unique balance is in the multitude of varieties adjusting to each other despite all prevalent inequalities. One kind trying to convert to another to attain equality upsets the balance rather than setting it right. The nature of the other species does not accept this change. Immediately, it transforms its nature to some other form so as to restore the original balance – the one prevalent in the earlier inequality.

For about 20-25 years, many women of the new generation are entering more and more into the realms of manhood. And men have been encouraging them, too. Men enthuse them in the path of equality by educating them on the Rights Movements, which were hitherto unknown to women. Women are unaware of these ideas by themselves. But Nature – its balancing – does not lie in equalisation! What happens as a result? Although men encourage equality outwardly, within themselves the nature of the species finds explosive expression to manifest its manhood transcending the equality. It exhibits its manliness in a more cruel and violent manner. It is only in the past 20-25 years that, as a consequence of women adopting manhood, men have turned more and more violent.

I am talking about the state of our country. More than other nations, it is our nation which has been known for its *sattvika* (purity, absolute goodness) nature. Even foreigners have pointed

it out. In other countries, violence has been prevailing for a long time; man-woman equality was also on similar lines. The women of those countries have never practised qualities like chastity and modesty like our women. I am not finding fault with them. I am just stating the fact. Great men and women would exist in all countries at all times. But, that apart, women there generally assume the masculine hustle and bustle of life much more than our women. In spite of this, men possess more strength and power than women and many of them adopt the path of violence. Anywhere, more than women it is men, who tend to be violent. Only rarely one could find a woman being the chief of dacoits.<sup>14</sup>

The crux of the matter is that if woman forsakes her gentleness, the nature of man – which is always one step ahead of woman in strength – advances one step, forsakes its human traits like softness totally, and adopts the nature of *asura jati* (demonic species), thus transforming man into a cruel and violent person.

One person trying to overtake the other is called one-upmanship. I perceive this term in a different way. I am equating the term 'manship' with 'the nature of man'. I see that, unable to tolerate woman becoming equal to man, the manship always tends to go 'one up'.

Such hardening of man happens both at the gross and subtle levels and they go hand in hand. It all began some 20-25 years ago with men – whose families did not have the custom of sporting moustaches – starting to grow moustaches. Everyone began to have all sorts of big-sized moustaches and sideburns, which, till then, had been associated only with violent and wicked people. Dress followed suit. They began to wear dresses that were till then depicted only in the paintings of bandits and prisoners. It did not stop with the external manifestation.

In hard economy for all ages  
older isn't better – It's brutal

This year, an estimated 1.5 million Americans will declare bankruptcy. Many people may chalk up that misfortune to overspending or a lavish lifestyle, but a new study suggests that more than 60 percent of people who go bankrupt are actually capsized by medical bills.

Bankruptcies due to medical bills increased by nearly 50 percent in a six-year period, from 46 percent in 2001 to 62 percent in 2007, and most of those who filed for bankruptcy were middle-class, well-educated homeowners, according to a report that will be published in the August issue of *The American Journal of Medicine*.

(*CNN.com Health, 5 June 2009*)

“If I break my wrist, I lose my house,” said Susan Zimmerman, aged 62, a freelance writer in Cleveland, of the distress that a medical emergency would wreak upon her finances and her quality of life. None of the three part-time jobs she has cobbled together pay benefits, and she says she is counting the days until she becomes eligible for Medicare.

In the meantime, Ms. Zimmerman has fashioned her own regimen of home remedies — including eating blue cheese instead of taking penicillin and consuming plenty of orange juice, red wine, coffee and whatever else the latest longevity studies recommend — to maintain her health, which she must do if she wants to continue paying the bills.

“I will probably be working until I’m 100,” she said.

(*New York Times, 2 February 2013*)

The problem is two-fold in the American society. One, the godly and remarkably ingenious and industrious elderly who can mentor are being replaced themselves with the first fruits of the entitlement and feminist generation. So, godly mentors are becoming more rare as we follow our lineage of the break from morality and foundational truth in our nation, to the acceptance of progressive principles. The second problem is that those who will heed their sage and truth-filled advice are fewer and fewer as the 'me generation' views history as something to re-write and mock.

*(culled from the internet)*

A study on typical Americans at age 65 has found out that 54% of that age group are 'broke'.

- Burke Hedges (2009)

What do old-age homes in India indicate  
– if not an erosion of family concern and love?



Only recently, Gandhi had created such an impact with the concept of *ahimsa* that even foreigners included the term *ahimsa* in their dictionaries to denote non-violence. In such a country, when we flip across a newspaper, we find acts of violence, terrorism and militancy on almost every page. Chain-snatching, burglary, robbery, murder, looting, plundering and such occurrences, which had been taking place rarely, are on the increase day by day. Apart from these, there are organised troops similar to armies, posing covertly or overtly and are a nonstop headache to the government: The police themselves fear to act against these people.

Why such a radical change and how are we to bring back goodness and peace? Well-meaning people have been pondering over these occurrences and are writing and talking a lot about this situation. They have been putting forth several suggestions too.

The important reason, which I feel, behind the escalation of violence, is that the balance that existed between man and woman in Nature has been upset by the women who have forsaken their humility and have adopted the activities of men.

Unable to tolerate this, Nature – the nature of man – intensifies its aggressive demeanour and is avenging it. Men have fallen headlong into unruliness and are indulging in violent and cruel activities.

I know of only one reason and I know of one solution alone.

I really wonder if anyone would listen to me. One may think that I am blabbering like a mad-cap. Even then I am expressing the same. I do not mean to say that reasons adduced by the so-called intellectuals are wrong. They may also be valid. Along with them, I want to add a very important cause that comes to my mind. In fact, I have already detailed about the same.

That is –

The important reason, which I feel, behind the escalation of violence, is that the balance that existed between man and woman in Nature has been upset by the women who have forsaken their humility and have adopted the activities of men. Unable to tolerate this, Nature – the nature of man – intensifies its aggressive demeanour and is avenging it. Men have fallen headlong into unruliness and are indulging in violent and cruel activities.

Revenge against the female race

Although their aggression in general affects society as a whole, one should notice the fact that most of the happenings occur in the form of particularly targeting the women with a vengeance. If one were to notice this, one might accept the reason I put forth that 'the arrogance of men is a reaction to women forsaking their modesty'. Then, my reasoning may not seem so crazy after all.

How do they seek revenge upon women? They do it in so many ways: The wrongs and crimes, which were quite rare in the past, are being perpetuated on a large scale throughout the country today. Beginning with 'eve-teasing', wherein girls are provoked..... I feel ashamed to state any further..... dragging them nude in public, ..... gang-raping – such acts are being unleashed in a disastrous manner. Newspapers are rife with such news everyday. It is said that movies and plays also portray such

atrocities in a variety of ways and so do story books. Another addition to this list is *varadakshina* (dowry): Wife being burnt alive for not bringing enough dowry and other gifts. Newspapers bring out 2-3 news items like these daily. If those reported in news are 2-3, then imagine how many would go unreported?

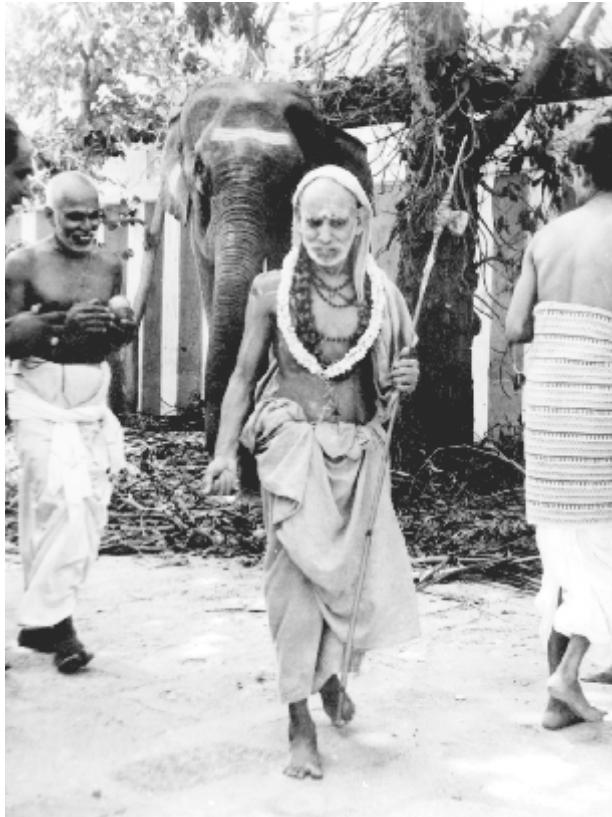
On the one hand, several men sincerely say that more and more positions have to be allotted for women in all spheres. They also do as they say. On the other hand, cruelties and atrocities on women as stated above continue to take place. It is all unfair and unbearable. What else can be done? The *Maha Sakti* called Nature has meticulously given form to an order, as in a dam, which we are not able to understand. Though driven wholly by noble intentions, if we cause a breach in the order on one side, consequently, it will inevitably react in some other way causing an even bigger breach.

The only solution

This is the cause.

What is the solution?

The only solution is returning to the fold of Nature. We must boldly discard our imaginary assumptions that there is no order in Nature; that we have to set things right through our efforts. And, forsake all actions we undertake in the name of 'progress'. There lies the solution. If the demonic arrogance of man has to be brought under control, the only solution is, women have to turn humble and perform their duties being at home, as in the olden days. This is what would seal the crack with sand. This huge change shall happen simply like magic! Whether anyone accepts this contention or not, I am strongly convinced about it. Preserving the ways of femininity, as enumerated by the *sastras*, those laid by the *sishtas* alone would bring men under control, in consonance with civilised social life. This is the only solution that I see.



There is no ecological balance in  
the many varieties becoming equal:  
This unique balance is in the multitude  
of varieties adjusting to each other  
despite all prevalent inequalities.



### The guardians of women's liberation

Tejpal, who is currently in Sada Jail, Goa, was chargesheeted under all the even sections for which he has been booked:

1. molestation
2. sexual harassment and outraging the modesty of a woman
3. wrongful restraint
4. wrongful confinement
5. rape
6. rape by a person in a position of control or dominance over a woman and
7. rape by a relative or guardian or a person in a position of trust or authority, and rape by a person in a fiduciary position.

Tejpal has been accused by a former junior colleague of assaulting her in a lift at the Grand Hyatt hotel, Bambolim, on two occasions on November 7 and 8, 2013, during the Thinkfest event.

While Tejpal's admission — in an e-mail sent to the victim and another, titled "Atonement", sent to Tehelka's then managing editor Shoma Chaudhury — and the woman's statement constitute the primary evidence against him.

*(Indian Express, February 17, 2014)*

Note: 1. The victim and Tejpal's daughter are of the same age group.

2. Tejpal and Shoma Choudhury had been considered guardians of freedom and women's rights by so called intellectuals. One can still find many people justifying Tejpal and Shoma Chaudhury.

3. Newspapers have also published news about Tejpal's repeated assertions to his wife and daughter that 'it all was on mutual consensus and so nothing wrong in it'.

The less said, the better!

4. Tejpal had written a cover story (Sex in the 90s) in a leading English weekly called the Outlook (11 September 1996). The story based on many surveys (about both ethical and unethical sex practices and relationships) conducted in various metros of India is nothing but a reflection of the pervert mind of this gentleman right from the beginning of his career.

5. These details are put forth to the reader not with an aim to criticise a man called Tejpal, but to make the readers aware of the agenda of such 'saviours' of liberation and freedom of women.

## Is it possible?

If there is a will, nothing is impossible. In the solution advocated by us, there is nothing that is impossible for women. Superficially whatever be their manifestations, deep within themselves, their very nature is humility. If only they apply their hearts to it, they can sustain this humility very easily. Even if they tread that path a little, they can find more self-satisfaction and peace of mind in it than what they are experiencing through the so-called progress. Even if they make a little of what looks like a sacrifice now, they can benefit a lot.

It will raise them higher and higher. The 'sacrifice' would not be one that gives pain, rather, one that fills the soul with contentment. On that basis, love, patience, humility and service would begin to flourish automatically.

What is difficult is to defy nature. Those who did that difficult task easily, can they not easily accomplish the task of going along in harmony with nature? If they have the will, they can do it. I pray to Goddess *Parasakti* to bless them to have that will.

Their only focus is in achieving equality at all costs. In such a scenario, will it not sound contradictory if I say it is only sacrifice that is needed – women should be modest and remain like *tyagis* (one who sacrifices for the sake of the well-being of others) – for maintaining *dharma* in the family, in the world and in the universe? Naturally, for modern women, it would appear like suppression by the male. They would tend to think: 'Why sacrifice? Why submit?' That is why I beseech the grace of Mother *Parasakti*. For, it is only Her grace that would help achieve what is impossible through our capacity and power.

## The issue about dress

An important thing has to be pointed out in the matter of safeguarding femininity. This aspect has been troubling my mind very much. It is a great shame that I have had to utter a thing like this. Yet, I am pointing it out. The reason is this: Without even a slight objection by the society, rather, with the full support of the society, some *dosha* (blemish) is let loose; I know full well that it is a blemish; all I can do is to point it out. If I do not do even that, then, that in itself is a *maha dosha* (a great blemish) – That is why I am pointing it out.

It is about dressing. When women copycat men by all means including aspects like gait, dress and thought, the crux of the issue is dress. It is very important to the extent of being quoted as 'Half the personality of man is his attire'.

Even before girl children attained puberty, to ensure that *lajja* (shyness), an important aspect of femininity, is preserved, they were taught to wear a *dhavani* (half-sari) over their jacket above the skirt and this has been so for many generations. Then, within a couple of years, they would begin to wear a full sari (traditional Indian attire of women). Sari, which has been the most important safeguard of the important aspect of femininity called *lajja* (shyness) is now facing danger. It is only me that is embarrassed. On the contrary, women seem to do so deliberately.

A few days ago, two college girls had come to visit me. Of course, they offered *namaskaram* (salutation) with utmost humility. But, I felt it was a little strange that they were dressed in male attire – something like salwar-kameez. I thought that they might have come to Kanchipuram for some activity like an NCC camp and hence would have come for *darsan* in that dress itself. However,

I came to know later that it was not the case and this dress was becoming the attire of young women until marriage and the custom of wearing half-sari was also disappearing. It was a big shock to me.<sup>15</sup>

The reason why I was shocked is that with regard to dress, it is only the women who have been preserving the culture and traditions unique to our nation. Men started sporting European attire even as far back as four generations ago. However, women had not done so. Even in photographs, I have witnessed that the husband might be wearing a coat and suit, but his wife would stand near him in a sari clad as per the norms of their community.

Although not as much as it is now, women going to college, working in offices, engaging in various other spheres of activity, going abroad, etc. have happened even before. Women driving cars, riding on cycles have also been there for a long time, although rarely. Even though they spread into new areas like these, they did not give up the habit of wearing sari. Nurses alone were an exception. Yet, they too were only observing hospital rules and not doing so out of personal wish.

After independence, as days progressed, men, however, were becoming more and more westernised. Even those who wore dhoti (traditional Indian attire of men) during the British rule have started wearing the English dress after independence – not only when they were involved in outside work, this has gradually encroached into the house too. Or else, they merrily sport *lungi* (a sarong-like garment mostly preferred by Muslims in India) like a Turk. For a huge, ancient and cultured nation like ours, it is a shame that there is no attire of its own – national dress – but only an alien dress has been adopted by us. It is only women who have

resisted this trend and stuck to the traditional dress even after independence, for several years. It offered enormous consolation and hope. It is indeed a great shock that this custom too is under threat now.

Well, right from the beginning of my sainthood, I have heard several matters of shock. But, the impact of this shock is all of them put together.

Magazines write that I am preserving *dharma* in a great way. My *jayanti* (birthday) is celebrated at many places where people heap praises upon me about how I have revived *dharma*. However, it appears to me that they are taking a dig at me pointing out what I have failed to achieve: "Hi old fellow, you are celebrating yourself up to the ninetieth *jayanti*! What right do you have to celebrate your *jayanti*? Every year you are throwing away *dharma* after *dharma* like anything! How has the *Sanatana dharma* (the eternal *dharma* based on the vision of the Vedas) been declining since your ascending the *peetha* (institution for preserving culture, philosophy and *dharma*)? You have pompously adorned yourself with the title *Jagadguru* (*guru* of the whole world), but had you had an iota of power – *taposakti* (power of penance) or *bhaktisakti* (power of devotion) – that could instill *dharma* in the world, would this dismal situation have arisen? Not possessing the ability of preserving at least what still remains, are you not frittering away *dharma* left and right?" All these birthday celebrations and approbations seem to me like a whiplash reminding me of such failures.

Of all the several *dharmic* disciplines uprooted before my very eyes, our women giving up sari and draping some dress akin to men's attire shocked me as the most serious loss.

These are the ones who guide the society

The Consortium of Pub-going, Loose and Forward Women – which had more than 10,000 members by last night – is urging Indian women to defy the radicals by enjoying a drink at their nearest pub on Saturday.

Their website states: "Walk to the nearest pub and buy a drink. Raise a toast to the Sri Ram Sena."

The group was founded on Face-book last week in protest at the Sri Ram Sena, which assaulted several young women last month in a pub in Mangalore, a college town in the southern state of Karnataka.

Muthalik, the chief of Sri Ram Sena, was arrested but has been bailed out. He has vowed to force unmarried couples found together on Valentine's Day to either get married or to tie rakhis – string bracelets – on their wrists signifying that they are brother and sister. (*Women of Power*)

... Turning the iconic freedom struggle slogan jail bharo on its head, Minister of State for Women and Child Development Renuka Choudhary on Thursday suggested that the only way to tackle the moral police \* was to launch a pub bharo andolan. (A call to Indian women to fill pubs and bars as a revolt.)

(*Timesonline, 6 February 2009*)

\* as in the case of Sri Ram Sena

Liberated already?

'Indian films rank high on sexualisation of women' finds a first-ever UN sponsored global study of women characters in popular films across the world. (*The Hindu, 24 September 2014*)

## The biggest asset of Bharatiya stree dharma

There is no attire like sari to protect the most vital characteristic of femininity called *lajja* (shyness). It is a big wealth discovered by the *Bharatiya Stree Dharma* – the wealth that protects honour and purity.

Leave alone this reason, don't we witness westerners praising the Indian sari? With an eye for art, they claim that sari has great elegance (*lalitam*) and celebrate the graceful nature of it. They say it is not only beautiful but also dignified.

In spite of being British, did not Annie Besant wear sari? She would dwell at length on the greatness of sari. She would say, "It is not with an eye on popularity but I find that there is dignity and several other subtle virtues in wearing sari."

Women of today seem to argue that during office work and also for kitchen chores, it is only salwar-kameez which is far more convenient than sari. Can honour and dignity be given up for the sake of convenience? That I do not approve of women going to work in offices and engaging in several other feats is well known. However, for the sake of argument, let us assume that I approve of them all and now I ask: "Do not these women boast that their modern spirit consists in facing challenges? Let them consider the challenge thrown by uneducated woman labourers doing masonry work. Dressed in sari and tucking it honourably to the waist, do they not engage in a hard physical labour and work with an intense speed? Are these modern women involved in a harder physical labour than those unskilled labourers? Why should they lack the efficiency of those labourer-women? Similarly, if these 'all challenging women' are unable to work in the kitchen dressed in sari, it only means that they have lost the game to their mothers and grandmothers whom they look down upon as stupids."

I heard about an awkward argument. I feel it is too indecent even to mention it. Nor am I able to desist from mentioning it. These women seem to claim, "Those who wear saris, if they do not sport the upper part of the same properly, it is that which appears bad; but a kameez covers the body fully." My only question to them is why should the sari-wearer fail to cover the upper portion properly? The way to correct the wrong is to wear the sari properly covering oneself well. It is not in replacing sari with another kind of dress.

The jacket worn inside the sari must cover well up to the neck and waist. Even though the kameez covers the neck, hip and the arms, one should not do away with the traditional attire.

### A blow to culture

Today they get the kameez stitched in such a way as to fully cover the body! Who knows what fashion these people might introduce to it tomorrow! It is the salwar-kameez worn by Sardarinis, imitating the Turkish women, that has come along to drive out the sari, the most majestic creation of the Indian culture. Will it stop with this? What is fashion after all than to keep on changing to newer and newer designs? I shudder at the thought of the English dress, swimsuit and the like catching on, driving away all the honour and respect.

Me and my act of augmenting the sway of the *dharma!* Earlier, I used to say that women must wear the sari in the traditional way with folds. Now, the 'improvement' has come to mean that women must wear sari. I wonder how many more days I have to live, how many more degradations I will have to witness and comment upon!!

If the girls who have attained puberty do not wear saris until marriage now, will it stop with that? Is it not that these modern

uncultured fashions usually enlarge and expand their vistas with an insatiable hunger like an infectious disease? As it makes more forays, would all women in the country, including the middle aged and the aged grandmothers, switch to salwar-kameez? Would it not be like a severe blow on the very head of our national culture? This troubles me immensely.

### Contagious Disease

If not for *sashtra* and *sampradaya*, at least on a different doctrine, I expected that two groups of women would refrain from changing over to these new fashion garments. There is a group in the country which has a strong Hindu sentiment and frowns on alien fashion. This group is more influential and popular in the north of the country than in the south. I was hoping that women of that group would not change to the alien salwar-kameez. But on enquiry, I found that it is not so; even those women are being swept away by the currents of new fashion. The other group belongs to our place. These are the people who say there should be no domination by the north, and the Tamil culture must be preserved! I was waiting to see if at least the women of this group would reject salwar-kameez as being unsuitable to Tamil culture. That hope has been belied too. Now, it is learnt, that this new fashionable dress has preyed upon all the young women of this country like an infectious disease spreading its tentacles across the land. Indeed, slaughter of the culture!

### None to speak the truth

Right from the time I was born, acts of *sashtra virodham* (against the *sastras*) which go in the name of reform and modern fashions have always been flooding like waves. Yet, if 90 out of 100 took to that different path, at least ten persons stayed steadfast with 'orthodox buffs' like us. Through them we were able to swim against the

We are importing 'modern' ideas  
from countries like America

... In India, the interaction with neighbors is very informal. The relations with the neighbors are just like family members who can come and go anytime, especially if you are living in a colony. Here it is not like that. The people are so busy here that they hardly find a few minutes to talk to their neighbors. They leave for work in the mornings and return tired in the evenings.

... When a policeman asks you to stop your car, stop your car without any hesitation. Do not step out of your car unless asked for. The cop may consider it as an offense, and might shoot you for self-defense.

... Our American neighbor had baby a few months ago, their parents came a few days after the baby was born, they were here only for two days. Then it was mom, dad and the new born. Pretty much that's what happens with new parents in America. They don't have parents staying with them for 3 to 6 months.

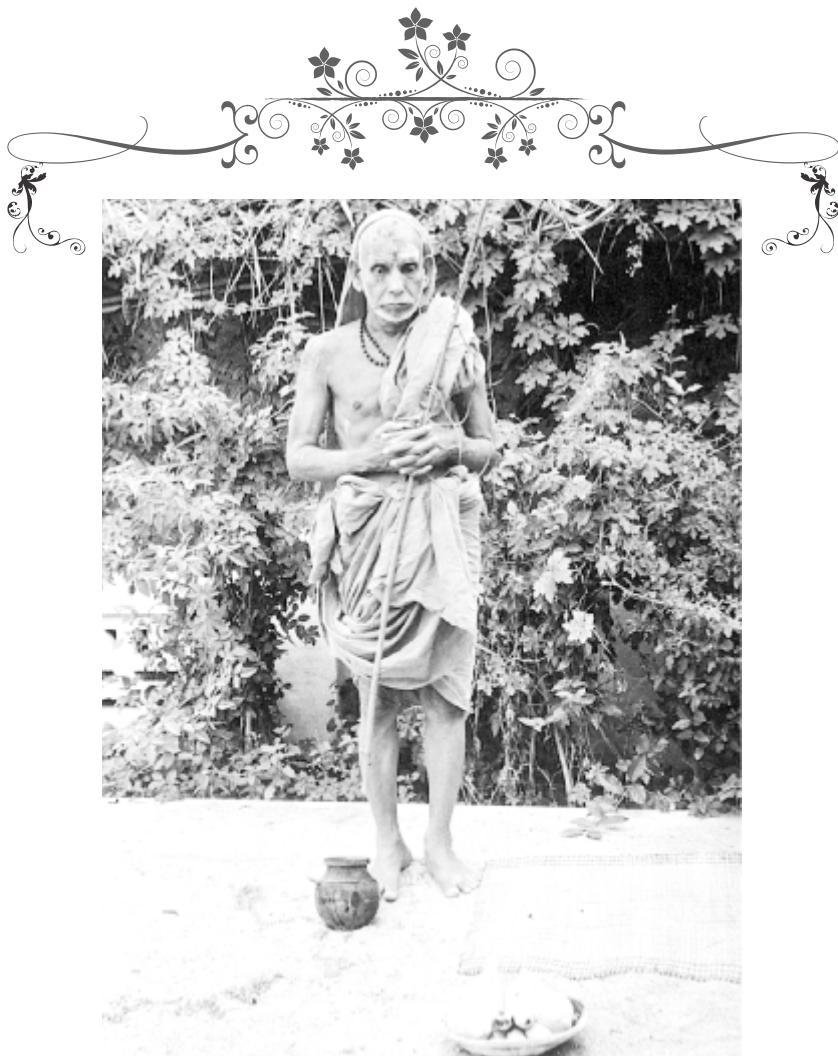
... In the US, society is very formal. You may say 'Hi' to a guy on elevator for 10 years and still know nothing about him.

*(NRIs share their knowledge about America – Culled from the internet)*

Are we going to import these things too?

Nude protesters demonstrate against the nudity ban in San Francisco, 2013 (*Wiki*)

June 2012 is here. The photo for this month's Nude Photo Revolutionary Calendar is that of English teacher and translator Luisa Batista. (*freethoughtblogs.com*)



There is no attire like sari to protect the most vital characteristic of femininity called *lajja* (shyness). It is a big wealth discovered by the *Bharatiya Stree Dharma* – the wealth that protects honour and purity.

current of the wave. About 40-45 years ago when wrong notions about woman's freedom strongly raved their head, I called for

paintings in support of their arguments. Besides, they cite as 'evidence' the references in old books to women smearing sandal paste and *kumkum* (saffron powder) over their bodies.

This is sheer nonsense.

Scholars consider the sculptures of *Mohenjo-Daro* to be the most ancient. There is a bearded statue in them. In that particular piece, even the man would be covering his upper body using an upper cloth with floral designs. While it is like this here, in *Harappa*, which belongs to the very same period of *Mohenjo-Daro*, there is a male statue completely unattired. Looking at these two statues what will a right thinker conclude? Would he think that people did not attire themselves at all, in the past?

"Certainly they wore clothes. Even the male covered not only the lower half of his body but also sported an *uttareeya* to cover the upper half. That is what the *Mohenjo-Daro* sculpture proves. That is realism to which the sculptor gave form. However, people like sculptors, poets who belong to the field of art, seldom stop with reality. In order to give expression to their imagination, they follow a 'tradition' – an 'artistic convention' – which is contrary to 'realism'. It is precisely following that tradition, that the *Harappan* sculptor has made an unattired statue!" Well, this is what a right and clear thinking man would conclude.

When men wore an upper garment, it is needless to talk of women. But, here, the sculptors and artists have shown figures without an upper cloth by using the artistic freedom allowed by tradition, a little too much. That the *sringara rasa* (element of love and beauty) enjoys primary status in the art world could be a reason why we find many specimens like these.

Again, it is only 'many' and not 'all'. In ancient sculptures of

*Gandhara*, the women are shown with an upper garment and also a jacket inside the sari. And the arm of the jacket would extend up

marriage that are recited in marriages to this day. In that, Suryaa is spoken of as wearing three kinds of garments called *asasanam*, *visasanam* and *ativikartanam*.

It is without noticing all these things that it is absurdly said that in olden times women did not wear an upper garment. In this land, where the honour and chastity of women have been valued above life, it could never have been like this. Kerala is an exception. The reason is, Parasurama had originally established it as a separate land and in such a way that it did not mingle with the national mainstream. Yet, he inhabited it only with people from the mainland. The only way to prevent those people from returning to the mainland was to change their customs and habits. In that case, he thought, the people of the mainland would consider them *mlechcha* (outcast) and boycott them without admitting them into their society. Hence, for the people of Kerala, he established a different version of many *sastric* customs and practices that had been prevalent in Bharat. One aspect of them was concerned about the upper garment of women.<sup>19</sup>

### Harm to atma sreyas (quality of the soul)

It seems that women who wear salwar-kameez wear a sort of *angavastra* (a long scarf-like material) over the kameez for name's sake. This upper garment would definitely not suffice for the dignity, honour and shyness of femininity. Wearing the sari properly and being under its protective cover alone is suitable and safe for them. Any dress that incites wrong thoughts in men is definitely dishonourable. *Bharata Varsham*, our country, has been safeguarding the chastity of women like fire and has made the same the life-blood of the nation. If any harm is caused to this tradition it would veritably crush the great culture to dust.<sup>19</sup>

The namesake upper cloth above the kameez may vanish in due course. For, nowadays they dress according to their convenience

the form of a *jatamudi* (hair-crown).<sup>21</sup>

Generally, growing hair is meant for those who gather powers. Even in the Bible, there is a story about a man called Samson, whose strength was stored in his hair. If great souls are in possession of excessive powers, it will be useful only for the good. But, if powers accumulate in us beyond a certain extent, it is definitely a danger. So, as far as a *grihastha* (householder) is concerned, he ought to tie the hair – which attracts powers – properly and keep it under control. As a *sannyasi* needs to discard all powers, and live in tranquility, he shaves his hair away (*kesavisarjanam*). He periodically undergoes *kesavisarjanam* on certain days as suggested by the sastras. Is it not that the hair is bound to grow till the next *kesavisarjanam*? It is to prevent the growing hair from attracting any power that he covers his head with a veil. Another reason for the veil is that the tonsured head should not be exhibited outside. *Sastras* prescribe that at times like *deeksha kala* (religious observance such as initiation, fast, etc.) when one has to absorb the power of penance, shaving is not to be done. The same *sastras* have made shaving an important ritual to be performed after the completion of the said period.

The crux of the matter is that if ordinary people like us leave hair untied and in disarray, it would invite only evil forces and influences.

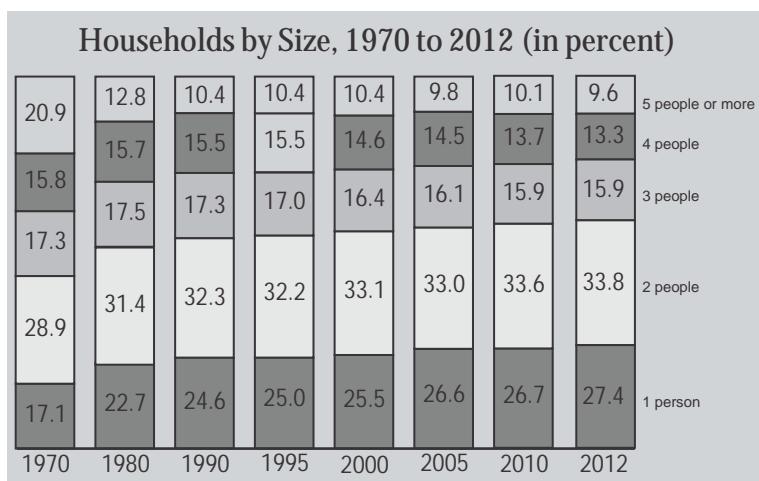
In black magic, when a ritual of destruction has to be performed, they would keep one's nail on the *yantra* (mystical configuration) with his hair wrapped around and bury it in the ground. From this itself we can learn that the ordinary hair, if not protected properly, will lead to immeasurable dangers and misfortunes.<sup>13</sup>

Since there is such scope for danger in the hair, it is totally wrong to trim it and sport a 'crop' in the case of man or a 'bob' in the case

## These statistics are from America

- \* 41 percent of first marriages end in divorce.
- \* 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce.
- \* 73 percent of third marriages end in divorce.
- \* Forty-three percent of children growing up in America today are being raised without their fathers.
- \* Seventy-five percent of children with divorced parents live with their mother.
- \* Half of all American children will witness the breakup of a parent's marriage. Of these children, close to half will also see the breakup of a parent's second marriage.
- \* There is one divorce approximately every 36 seconds. That's nearly 2,400 divorces per day, 16,800 divorces per week and 876,000 divorces a year.
- \* The average length of a marriage that ends in divorce is eight years.

*(culled from the internet)*



These are about India

Divorces are very high in love marriages, the Bombay High Court said on Monday while hearing the appeal of a man after a family court dismissed his divorce plea for wrongly alleging that his wife was HIV positive.

(*Times of India, 8 May, 2012*)

"If people have to be romantic and romance has to endure through thick and thin, the idea can be that if romance withers, the marriage has ended" says Patricia Uberoi, a New Delhi-based sociologist.

(*The World Post, 24/5/2009*)

... There's been a 100% increase in divorce rates in the past five years alone.

... Dr. Sharma, a marriage counsellor says, "I feel people are concentrating more on the careers and less on their personal lives. . . I also feel they lack patience and tolerance. They don't want to put more efforts into a relationship to fix the issues, and they feel that escapism is the solution."

(*BBC News, 1 January 2011* )

Acid attack is one of the most heinous crimes against women. It not only inflicts physical injuries but also destroys the victim's entire life, leaving the scars of the heinous crime on the body and mind of the victim.

(*India TV, 31 January 2015*)

About 20 million children – about 4% of child population in India – are orphans. Of them, parents of only 0.3% children have died and rest have been abandoned.

(*Hindustan Times, 6 December 2014*)

This is about America -

From 1997 until 2013, despite numerous cases involving sexual attacks on young girls, only one resulted in five men being imprisoned for abusing three teenage girls, according to the independent investigation. In other cases, the Rotherham police made outrageous judgments that girls as young as 12 were "tarts" engaged in "consensual sex." The abusers were left free to stalk other youngsters, first befriending girls then raping them and applying blackmail and threats to keep them in submission. Girls were even bartered to neighboring gangs as sex slaves in exchange for drugs or guns. (*International New York Times, 8 September 2014*)

This is about Africa -

Child rape is totally out of hand. Following the recent reports of child rape cases across the country, another nine-year old girl was badly burnt, raped and left for dead in the Cape Flats. Earlier this month a 37-year old father was arrested and charged for raping his 17-year old daughter.

(*UDM Today, 21 January 2014*)

But these are about India -

In the second such instance in less than 10 days, a six-year-old girl was allegedly raped on Tuesday and Wednesday by a Hindi teacher on the school campus in Bangalore.

(*Times of India, 31 October 2014*)

... There had been a 336 percent increase in child rapes in India since 2001, from 2,113 cases to 7,112 in 2011. But even this figure is likely to be an underestimate because only a minority of cases are reported to the police.

(*Telegraph, 21 April 2013*)

One example of women's labor being exploited would be the Noida Export Processing Zone, which is 24km from New Delhi. These zones, prefer to hire women because they are more docile and more productive than men. In short, they are easier to control and less likely to retaliate against less than ideal working conditions, which are exactly what thousands of women encounter 12 hours a day. This Zone at Noida is dangerous, hot and unsanitary. Unnecessary body searches are routine and complaints of sexual harassments occur more frequently in these zones. Overtime is compulsory, but women are paid lower rates than men. There are no maternity benefits and minimum wage is never enforced. Women who become pregnant or marry are immediately fired. In order to avoid being fired for becoming pregnant, women turn to unsafe abortions performed by unqualified doctors. Those who work in Special Economic Zones are more likely to suffer from respiratory problems, pelvic inflammatory disease, and severe cases of dehydration and anemia are common.

*(International Models Projects on Women's Rights, 6 June 2012)*



## The fruits reaped by America from 'Liberty'

First, we are more afraid: the threat of violence, theft, and intimidation is now a permanent possibility in life in urban America. Every inhabitant of a major city knows someone who has experienced, or has personally experienced, physical attack in some form.

We are more alone: separation and divorce statistics have reached new highs; and while some people choose to live alone and feel most comfortable in solitude, there are more people today who live alone because they are unable to find a suitable partner.

We are more professionally insecure: the threats of restructuring technological unemployment, inflation, recession, rising prices, and so on are also prevalent.

.... Another prevalent form of stress encountered by today's parent, particularly the mother, is role conflict. Within the short space of twenty five years, the role of the middle-class woman has been profoundly altered. In the 1950s, a woman who worked was looked down upon as someone who did not 'care enough' to look after her husband and children. Today, however, a quarter century after the feminist revolution, a middle-class woman who chooses the life of the house-wife is often regarded as unambitious (and therefore less intelligent than her working counterparts) and generally lacking in self-respect and female pride. The situation is complicated by the fact that with the higher divorce rate, more and more women have to work.

Thus many women are caught in a conflict between their desires to perform well the traditional role of mother (and wife) and what may well be an equally strong inclination to embrace the new professional and social possibilities opened up for women in our society.

.... Separation and divorce, perhaps the most pervasive and endemic source of stress, affect one in three marriages. Thus, almost half of American children under eighteen are likely to live in single-parent homes. Though stressful to both parents (as to children), divorce and separation mean something different for men and women.

There are other stresses as well: a woman's concern about whether she is still attractive to men, or how to go about meeting men; her anxiety that she may have to spend the rest of her life single – to stay entirely alone once the children are grown. Continued association with old friends (especially couples) from one's married days often proves more difficult for the single woman than for her bachelor ex-husband. New friends can be made, of course, but they are usually other single, divorced, or widowed women who may be under so much stress themselves that they have little support to give to others. Going to a movie or play or concert suddenly looms as a problem if the woman is not in the habit of going alone (or simply does not want to). In sum, needing to support children financially and emotionally, without herself enjoying those kinds of support, is perhaps the most severe stress encountered by a female in our society.

*(The Hurried Child – David Allen)*

of woman. In all matters like these, *sastra* is the final authority. We have to follow the definitions of the *sastras* in matters of what, for

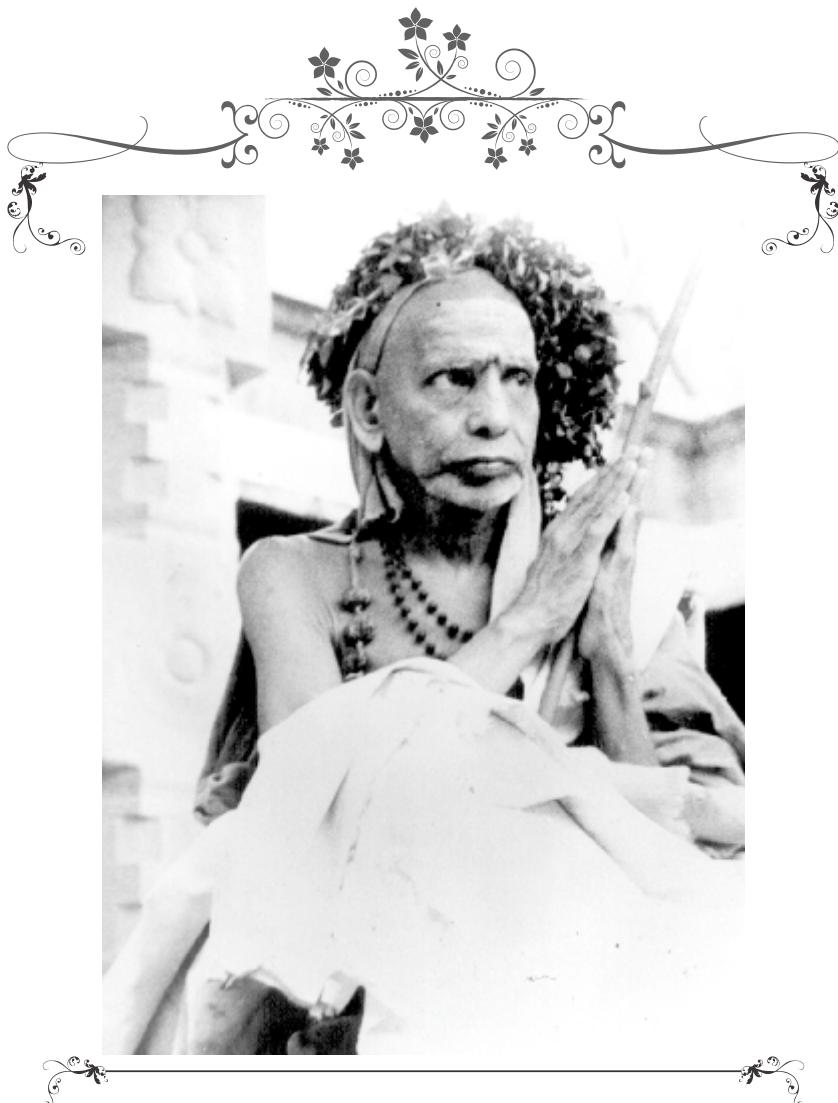
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\* An English phrase: 'If an event is the last straw or the straw that broke the camel's back, it is the latest in a series of unpleasant events and makes you feel that you cannot tolerate the situation any longer.'









Kanyas and sumangalis are born to spread this auspiciousness. Dress, braid, hair-knot, *tilakam* – all these have been designed by our ancestors to nurture the same.

848 Indian women are harassed, raped, killed every day

... Last year, over three lakh women were kidnapped, raped, molested and in some extreme cases, killed by men across the country. That's almost a 27 percent increase since 2012 and a year since the world's attention was drawn to the problem of sexual violence against women in India.

. . . According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau, cases of violent abuse of women have steadily increased since 2009. By 2013, the number of such cases has increased by over 50 percent. That's over 848 women who are either harassed, raped or killed after abduction every single day. Some are sold off to traffickers.

*(The Huffington Post in association with Times of India, 8 January 2015)*

How did the Indian society become this low?

A 24-year-old software engineer died after a makeshift dance floor gave way, plunging guests into the swimming pool below at a New Year's Eve bash in a hotel near Marina beach. Sumit Agnihotri, a Lucknow boy who lived with friends in a rented accommodation near his office at the Ambattur Industrial Estate here, was brought out of the pool bleeding and unconscious. He was declared dead this morning at Government General Hospital.

Third-year engineering student Anandan and his cousin Ramya, who is studying computer science, were injured and are undergoing treatment in a hospital.

"There was a big crowd, maybe more than 200 people, on the dance floor. As the music reached a crescendo amid flashes of laser lighting, there was a sudden thud and the

planks gave way," said Vijayaraghavan, a bank executive who was there with his wife.

The hotel had charged couples Rs 3,500 each and individuals Rs 2,999 each for the bash. Police sources said Agnihotri was the first to fall into the pool, and others fell on top of him, delaying his rescue. He died by drowning, the police added.

"It is the contractor's mistake in not having provided sufficient number of supports," a spokesperson for the hotel said.

Witnesses said there was a sudden surge on the stage just before midnight as a popular local television actress was sighted, and overcrowding caused the floor to collapse.

A hotel spokesperson said: "Luckily, we had a number of bouncers\* around, who quickly jumped into the swimming pool and rescued several people."

As fire service and police personnel arrived for rescue operations, some of those partying at the hotel resisted attempts to get them to leave. Some were seen scuffling with the police in an enclosure near the pool and demanding that the bash continue.

The hotel management tried to calm tempers by announcing that it would refund the money for the cancelled bash.

By the time the place was finally emptied, it was nearly an hour past midnight.

(*The Telegraph*, 2 January 2008)

\* bouncers - goons employed in big hotels to check customer indiscipline and non-payment of bills

## External appearance

Something called *mangalam, Lakshmikaram* (auspiciousness, divinity) – which is beyond anybody's description – purifies the mind through its beauty and fills it with happiness. *Kanyas* and *sumangalis* are born to spread this auspiciousness. Dress, braid, hair-knot, *tilakam* – all these have been designed by our ancestors to nurture the same.

Dress and ornaments are always considered together. Ornaments also contribute to the much-needed divinity aspect of femininity. It does not mean, however, that one should adorn oneself with a lot of jewels. In the name of auspiciousness, I do not suggest to give up the great quality called simplicity. Adorning oneself with plenty of jewels would only tempt and spoil the mind: even the poor would be tempted; would fall in a debt-trap. At the same time, in the name of simplicity, *kanyas* and *sumangalis* should not leave the ears, nose, neck and hands bare. What is the point in retaining simplicity only in the exterior, when we have complicated our minds extremely in the so-called name of modernity?

It is only the perversity of times that people act contrary to what the *sastras* say as to who should wear *tilakam* and jewels and who should not.

Because external symbols and inner mentality are related to one another, we are compelled to speak so extensively on these. Such disciplines which prescribe certain external appearances for women are in fact meant for their femininity to attain fruition internally.

## Surrender unto the husband

*Stree dharma* consists essentially in modesty. One has to bear this in mind constantly and set it as the ideal to be followed.

Tirukkural says, 'Humility makes one eternal'. However, the masculinity in the average man prevents him from being humble beyond a certain level. The world-drama is so wonderful that even that masculinity is inevitably required for everyday life. At the same time, if only the woman wills – with the help of her innate nature – she can progress far beyond man in the aspect of modesty. That alone would neutralise the effects of masculinity – just as how ghee neutralises the severity of spice in food. Precisely having this in mind, our *sastras* have deemed humility to be the most predominant duty of a woman, in particular. In other words, by stipulating humility for women, the intention of those who divined the *sastras*, was not to fetter women in the world of darkness; on the contrary, permit her join Eternity, the world of light. The intention of the *sastras* is that man or woman, both must be humble as far possible. As far as woman is concerned, this 'as far as possible' can easily go up to *saranagati*, where total self-denial reigns supreme. That's why it was set that woman must submit to the will of her husband.

Great souls have attained godhead only through self-denial and surrender to the will of God. Among men, such great souls, who have attained this supreme state, are so rare that one has to undertake an intensive search to find such people. For, it is too difficult to surrender to an unseen God. That's why *sastras* have revealed the concept of guru (spiritual master). While man has to surrender to a guru, for woman, it is her husband in the place of guru. Whereas in practice, male disciples are unable to surrender themselves totally even to a perfect guru. On the contrary, over so many generations, there have been *pativrata siromanis* (diadems of chastity), who have surrendered even unto an abject husband and have served him in spite of all his atrocities.

When I was scrolling through various sites,  
I happened to come across this page

- \* 20-Year-Old Girl Jumps Before Delhi Metro, Commits Suicide
- \* Jodhpur: Teased in School, Class IX Girl Commits Suicide
- \* Kanpur: Couple Commits Suicide over Family's Disapproval of Relationship
- \* Odisha Schoolgirl Commits Suicide for Pencil, Notebook
- \* Dehradun: Girl From Delhi Commits Suicide at AIIMS
- \* Delhi: Girl Allegedly Commits Suicide After Boyfriend Refuses to Marry Her
- \* 12-year-old girl allegedly raped, commits suicide in shame in West Bengal
- \* Muzaffarnagar: Minor girl commits suicide
- \* Mumbai: Teen commits suicide after alleged stalking on Facebook by friend
- \* 19-year-old girl allegedly commits suicide after harassment
- \* Allegedly ragged by four girls, faculty member, Bhopal student commits suicide
- \* Minor girl allegedly commits suicide in Delhi police station

*(NDTV news headlines from June to November 2014)*

(Recall what Periyava says: 'then imagine  
how many would go unreported?')



### Some traits of terrorists

Accepting that terrorists are heterogeneous, four traits may possibly be the characteristics of 'typical' terrorists:

- a) High affective valence regarding an ideological issue.
- b) A personal stake – such as strongly perceived oppression, humiliation, or persecution; an extraordinary need for identity, glory, or vengeance; or a drive for expression of intrinsic aggressivity – that distinguishes him or her from the vast majority of those who fulfill the characteristic 'a'.
- c) Low cognitive flexibility, low tolerance for ambiguity, and elevated tendency toward attribution error.
- d) A capacity to suppress both instinctive and learned moral constraints against harming innocents, whether due to intrinsic or acquired factors, individual or group forces – probably influenced by 'a', 'b', and 'c'.

*(The Mind of the Terrorist - A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES, University of Southern California School of Medicine)*

Even today, there would be such women elsewhere. It is because of their past karma (deeds) that they are suffering at the hands of their husbands. Instead of going against it, as they tolerate the atrocities with self-denial, no new karma would accrue. With no new karma accruing and the old karma exhausted, that itself would lead to annihilation of all karma. This results in the destruction of bondage of the world (*samsara bandha naasam*). The benefit for the soul – beyond which there could be no other benefit, and for whose sake even *jnanis* and *yogis* are striving like anything – that supreme noble goal is just like that attained by an ordinary woman. If she commands Surya (the Sun) not to rise, He does not rise. If she orders 'Bring back the life of my husband,' Yama (the God of Death) obeys implicitly. When she sprinkles water on the *Trimurtis* (the Divine Triad – Brahma, Vishnu, Siva) who had come to test her chastity, they turn to children. If she orders for rain, Varuna, the God of rain, showers aplenty. Thiruvalluvar says, 'Rain pours, if she orders.' It is not just the rain, even if she curses the whole city to be burnt to ashes, *Agni* (the God of Fire) carries out her orders, so we read in the story of Kannaki. When Anjaneya's tail was set on fire, Sita asks Agni to keep the tail cool and so does the God of Fire.<sup>23 24 25</sup>

We have to understand that it is with a view to raise women to the level of godliness that the *sastra* bids her to surrender unto her husband and not to shackle her through torture in the hands of whimsical men. Manu and the other *rishis*, who divined the *sastras*, had compassion for all living beings. Such people, even in their imagination, could not have wished to harm women, who are soft by nature. Even to kill an evil *rakshasi* like Thataka, an *avatara* (incarnation of God) like Rama – even after being ordered by Guru Visvamitra – thought one too many times. To this extent,

Manu and the other *rishis* had written against killing of any woman, advising kindness to be showered upon them. Conveniently forgetting such instances one should not talk according to one's own whims and fancies. "A woman is able to achieve even the most difficult task of 'surrender' and attain godhead! So, let her attain greatness by doing that which is feasible to her!" Thinking so, they laid down surrender as a rule for her.<sup>26 34</sup>

### Not a slave, but a friend

Indeed, accepting whatever the husband says without questioning him is good. Yet, some *maha pativratas* (great women of chastity) did not just carry out his wishes, rather, chose to point out to him what they felt right. *Sastras* quote such women and hail them as good examples.

Is there a greater *pativrata* than Sita? She is verily Goddess Mahalakshmi. When Rama refused to take her along with him for *vanavas* (exile in forest), did she not fearlessly debate with him about it? Is it not that Rama had to accept it ultimately? Later, in the Dandakaranya (a forest), *rishis* appeal to Rama to save them from the demons who are tormenting them. He promises them to do so. To this Sita raises her objections. She remarks, 'We have come here for *vanavas*. What is right for us is to do penance and lead a righteous, *sattvika* (pure, absolutely good) way of life. We are not supposed to engage ourselves in the killing of the demons.' With all the devotion to her husband, she adds, '*Smaraye tvam na sikshaye*. (I am only reminding you of what you already know and not teaching anything new to you.)' Thus, instead of blindly accepting what Rama says, has she not raised a contrary point of view? A pleased Rama addresses her as '*Dharmajne*' (one who knows dharma) and proceeds to point out that he was only

abiding by the *kshatriya dharma* (dharma meant for kings). In the same fashion as done by Sita, he adds that it was something which she already knew. And, Sita agrees.<sup>14 27</sup>

At the point when Sita expresses her disapproval for killing, she remarks, 'I say this out of my friendliness to you (*snehaya*).' '*Sneham*' is the point worth noting. It signifies that the wife is a friend to her husband – a sakha – (companion) and not a slave. It will be enough if we look at the meaning of *Saptapadi* and other *Veda mantras* chanted during marriages, to know that wife is husband's companion and not a slave. *Veda dharma* never considers wife as a slave of husband. As Tiruvalluvar has rightly named one of the chapters of the *Tirukkural* as *Vazhkai Thunai Nalam* (Qualities of the Companion of Life), *Veda dharma* considers husband and wife as a companion to each other, supporting each other and progress on the path of life. At the end of the *Saptapadi*, the bridegroom tells the bride very authentically, "Through this *Saptapadi*, we have become friends. May we not be separated from this companionship forever! Let us carry out the *sankalpas* (vows of married life) jointly. We shall undergo all the facets of life together."<sup>28</sup>

'*Samrajnee bhava* (Be the queen of the home)' is the Vedic blessing (*Veda mantra ashirvachanam*) to bless the bride: to be the queen – not to be a slave.<sup>29</sup>

There is another *Veda* mantra in the marriage ritual that precedes this. It would appear that the *Veda* may have gone way beyond what today's women's liberation people are preaching. In that, it is clearly mentioned, "*Moordhanam patyuhu aroha* (Sit on the head of your husband)!" Actually, it does not mean that the wife should enslave her husband. Don't we say 'carrying someone over our head' to mean extreme praise? That way, it means that a *grihini*

should administer the home so well as to win praise from the husband. If that be so, is it not clear that a husband should treat his wife not as a slave, but with much dignity by raising her above his head?<sup>29</sup>

### Six types of relationship between husband and wife

A *grihini* – that is, *illakkizhathi* (the proprietress of home; one who has right over the family) – though looks like a servant while doing household chores, is not a slave to her husband. Besides being a servant to her husband, the *Neeti Sastra* says, she performs various other roles and she is verily everything to her husband. \* *Vaidikas* (Brahmins well-versed in the Vedas) are supposed to perform *shatkarma* (6 duties): Reciting the Vedas and making others recite; performing *yajnas* (fire-sacrifice) and getting others perform *yajnas*; accepting *dana* (charity) from others and giving *dana* to others. Similarly, in the *Neeti Sastra*, a *shatkarma* has been laid down for women too. What are they?<sup>33 34</sup>

One, *kaaryeshu daasi* – To work as a servant.

Two, *karaneshu mantri* – She has to be a minister in lending advice to her husband. From this it is obvious that the husband should not behave in an autocratic manner and ought not to do anything without consulting his wife. This also implies that our forefathers had considered that women possessed sharp intelligence to the extent of offering counsel as a minister.

*Kaaryeshu daasi, karaneshu mantri* and third, *rupeshu Lakshmi* – Appear as Lakshmi in form, that is, she should appear auspicious. *Manu Dharma Sastra* too states that there is no difference between a *grihini* and *Mahalakshmi*. \*\*<sup>34</sup>

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\* Sloka 50

\*\* Chapter 9 Sloka 26



## A pandemic in diverse forms

According to a 2013 global review of available data, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. However, some national violence studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner.

It is estimated that of all women killed in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members.

More often than not, cases of violence against women go unreported. For instance, a study based on interviews with 42,000 women across the 28 Member States of the European Union revealed that only 14 per cent of women reported their most serious incident of intimate partner violence to the police, and 13 per cent reported their most serious incident of non-partner violence to the police.

Around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives.

More than 133 million girls and women have experienced some form of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where the harmful practice is most common. Beyond extreme physical and psychological pain, girls who undergo FGM are at risk of prolonged bleeding, infection (including HIV), infertility, complications during pregnancy and death.

Trafficking ensnares millions of women and girls in modern-day slavery. Women and girls represent 55 per cent of the estimated 20.9 million victims of forced labour worldwide, and 98 per cent of the estimated 4.5 million forced into sexual exploitation.

Between 40 and 50 per cent of women in European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at work.

In the United States, 83 per cent of girls in grades 8 through 11 (aged 12 to 16) have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.

Women in urban areas are twice as likely as men to experience violence, particularly in developing countries.

In New Delhi, a 2010 study found that 66 per cent of women reported experiencing sexual harassment between two and five times during the past year.

A decade of cross-sectional research from African countries and more recently, India, has consistently found women who have experienced partner violence to be more likely to be infected with HIV.

(UN Women)

Four, *kshamaya Dharitri* – She who needs to appear as *Sridevi (Mahalakshmi)* in form, also needs to be *Bhoodevi* (Goddess of Earth) by virtue of her patience.

The fifth one is *snehe cha mata*. Here we can see what an exalted status has been given to woman by the *dharma*. She has to shower love on her husband like a mother on her child. It raises the wife to the level of mother to her husband. The Veda, the earliest and the most fundamental of all scriptures, blesses a woman thus: 'Bear ten children and make your husband the eleventh child.' Had she been considered a slave, would this have been said?

Having spoken of these five, lastly it states that she should also entertain her husband with carnal pleasures. It says she must be like a veritable prostitute in this: *sayane tu vesya*.

*Kaaryeshu daasi, karaneshu mantri,  
rupeshu Lakshmi; kshamaya Dharitri.*

*Snehe cha mata, sayane tu vesya  
shatkarma yukta kuladharma patni.*

Not slavery, but protection

I mentioned about Manu. I said he has considered the *grihini*, verily *Mahalakshmi*. It is with him that the nouveau ideologues are terribly angry. They are angry because he had said, 'Women are not fit to be independent: During their childhood they have to be under the protection of their father; during the middle age, under that of their husbands; and during the old age, they have to be protected by their sons.' As I said earlier, humility leads to *saranagati* (surrender) which is contrary to independence. It is only surrender and humility that are the ultimate goal of the *sastras*. Since women are capable of attaining that supreme goal without much difficulty, Manu had prescribed it as a strict code for them. Even then, he has only said that the father, husband or sons

should protect her. He has not said that they should ill-treat and torture her as a slave:

<sup>34</sup>

*Pita rakshati kaumare, bharta rakshati yauvane.*

*Rakshanti vardhake putra: na stree svaatantryamarhati.* \*

Will anyone scatter the precious stones (*navamani*) like ordinary ones? Women are equivalent to precious stones. That is why they are called '*penmani*', '*nareemani*' (pen = naree = woman; mani = stone). No such epithet is used to describe men. 'Let men get scattered in the external world; but let not women get scattered so. Through their independence they may end up harming themselves. When they are let out, other men may also cause harm to them. To avoid giving room for all these, like how the gems are safely protected in a box, women have to be protected at home by their father, husband or children at the corresponding stage in their lives. That alone will be appropriate.' That's why *Manu Dharma Sastra* has codified like this.

<sup>34</sup>

No father would consider his daughter as a slave and torture her. So also the son. Even according to the *sastras*, the son has to accord the primary place only to his mother and the father occupies the next place only. If such a son were to torture his mother, then it would be a grave sin, with no *prayaschitta* (expiation) for redemption, according to the *sastras*. In the *sloka* (verse) of Manu it is clearly stated that a husband ought to treat his wife like her father and sons, and not ill-treat her or boss over her – it clearly says '*bharta rakshati yauvane*'.

Apart from not saying that women be tortured, in another place, he very clearly mentions that they have to be treated with utmost honour and should be worshipped.

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\* Manusmriti 9.3

*Yatra naryastu pujyante ramante tatra devata:*

*Yatraitastu na pujyantesarvastatraaphala: kriya: \**

'Where women are treated worshipfully, there the gods become happy and bless them. And where the women are not treated thus, whatever effort undertaken will not bear fruit.'

### Our gods as exemplars

Upon seeing our gods themselves, we can understand the high status they have given to women. Brahma (the God of Creation) has placed Saraswati (Brahma's consort) in His very tongue. Mahavishnu (God of Protection) adorns Mahalakshmi (Mahavishnu's consort) in His chest. Paramesvara (God of Destruction) has verily given His half body to Ambal (Paramesvara's consort). If 'modern' women have put the names of their husbands behind theirs, our male gods have placed the names of their wives before theirs – Umamahesvar, Gowrisankar, Lakshminarayan, Sitaram, Radhakrishna and so on.<sup>30</sup>

In our tradition, lending utmost importance to women, we observe *sumangali prarthana* (a kind of worship of the deceased *sumangalis*), whereas men do not have any such thing. No male is positioned on a pedestal and worshiped by other men as done in *suvasini puja* (worshipping a girl or a married woman). Blouse-bit and *tamboolam* are given (an act of paying respect to guests) only to women and men are not given any cloth. What is there for males comparable to the *Navaratri* (nine night festival) which is a cause for grand celebrations for women?<sup>31</sup>

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\* Manusmriti 3.56

## The pot-bearer's fortune

It is only woman who is considered as the repository of all fortunes. While referring to a man, we just add '*Chiranjeevi*' (with a long life) before his name. That's all. However, during such a long life, one cannot guarantee all prosperity and auspiciousness. But, in the case of woman, we do not stop with '*Chirayushi*' (with a long life). We also add '*Sowbhagyawati*' (repository of all fortunes).

A Tamil proverb goes like this: '*Yer pidithavan enna seivaan? Paanai pidithaval bhagyam.*' (What can the man holding the plough do? It all is due to the welfare of the pot-bearing woman.) The essence of the saying is that the *grihini* is the focal point for fortunes of the household.<sup>32</sup>

*Griha* (the house) is her empire. The other meaning of the word *griham* is verily *grihini* itself. And that is why, fixing an auspicious day for *grihapravesa* (housewarming) is done primarily in accordance with the star of the *grihini*. In Tamil, the *grihini* is called '*illaal*' (one who rules the house - illam). No such name as '*illaan*' for the husband. '*Illaan*' means one who has nothing. So, it is only the wife, who rules the home – not with authority, but with humility.<sup>33</sup>

If she remains so naturally, that is beauty; that is sublime.

The *sastra* expects women to be humble through their volition, and not through subjugation by others. And that is what I ask of them now.

## Essence of this talk

For the very humanity (*manushyatva*), where femininity and masculinity both dissolve in, humility is very important. However, masculinity cannot be submissive beyond a certain level. In this strange and unique world-drama created by

# From the Crime Records Bureau of India

Trend of some major crime heads over the years 1953-2013

Total Cog. Crimes Under IPC		Murder		Rape		Kidnapping & Abduction		Dacoity		Robbery		Burglary/House Breaking		Riots	
Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence	Year	Incidence
1953	6,01,964	1953	9,802	1971*	2,487	1953	5,261	1953	5,579	1953	8,407	1953	1,47,379	1953	20,529
2013	26,47,722	2013	33,201	2013	33,707	2013	65,461	2013	4,539	2013	31,927	2013	1,04,401	2013	72,126
% Change in 2013 over 1953	339.8				238.7		1255.3		1144.3		-18.6		279.8		-29.2
															251.3

\*Bureau started collecting data on "Rape" since 1971 only.

**Table – 5(A)**  
**Crime head-wise incidents of crime against women during 2009 - 2013 and percentage variation in 2013 over 2012**

Sl. No.	Crime head	Year					Percentage variation in 2013 over 2012
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
1.	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	27,397	22,172	24,206	24,623	33,707	35.4
2.	Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 366B IPC)	26,741	28,056	35,465	38,982	51,881	35.8
3.	Dowry death (Sec. 302 + 304 IPC)	8,383	8,351	8,618	8,233	8,053	-1.8
4.	Poison by Ingestion or Inhalation (Sec. 489-A IPC)	28,546	34,141	38,126	1,08,227	1,15,088	11.6
5.	Assault on woman with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec. 354 IPC)	38,711	40,613	42,068	45,351	70,739	58.0
6.	Insult to the modesty of women (Sec. 309 IPC)	11,306	9,061	8,570	9,173	12,680	37.2
7.	Importation of girl from foreign country (Sec. 366 B IPC)	48	36	60	59	31	-47.4
<b>A.</b>	<b>Total IPC crime against Women</b>	<b>1,94,832</b>	<b>2,05,008</b>	<b>2,19,142</b>	<b>2,32,528</b>	<b>2,85,095</b>	<b>27.3</b>
8.	Commission of Sex Prevention Act, 1967	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
9.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,063	2,679	9.5
10.	Indecent Representation of Women (P) Act, 1995	515	586	463	141	392	158.7
11.	The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	5,950	5,182	6,619	9,038	10,700	17.0
<b>B.</b>	<b>Total SLL crime against Women</b>	<b>5,969</b>	<b>8,376</b>	<b>9,507</b>	<b>11,742</b>	<b>13,650</b>	<b>16.2</b>
	<b>Total(A+B)</b>	<b>2,03,804</b>	<b>2,13,585</b>	<b>2,28,649</b>	<b>2,44,270</b>	<b>3,09,646</b>	<b>26.7</b>

### Reported incidents of crime

A total of 3,09,546 cases of crime against women were reported in the country during the year 2013 as compared to 2,44,270 in the year 2012, thus showing an increase of 26.7% during the year 2013. These crimes have continuously increased with 2,03,804 cases in 2009 and 2,13,585 cases in 2010 and 2,28,649 cases in 2011, 2,44,270 cases 2012 and 3,09,546 cases in the year 2013.

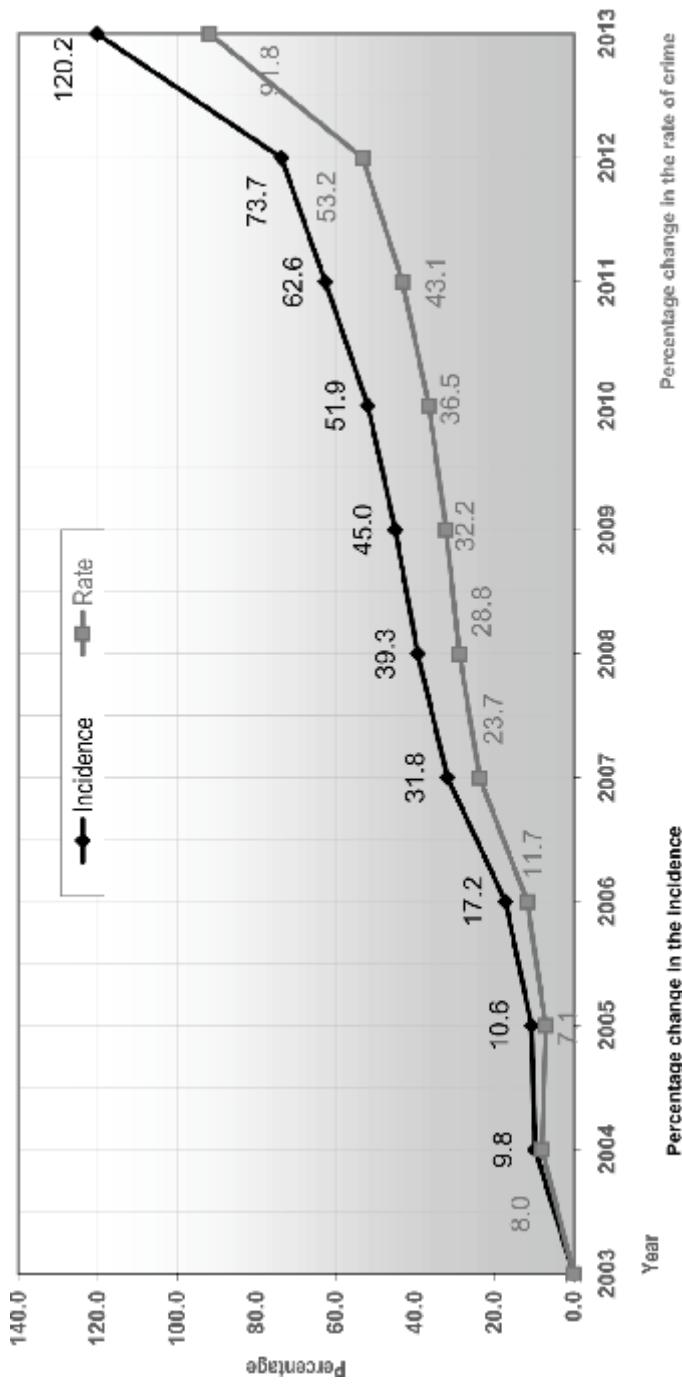
#### Incest rape

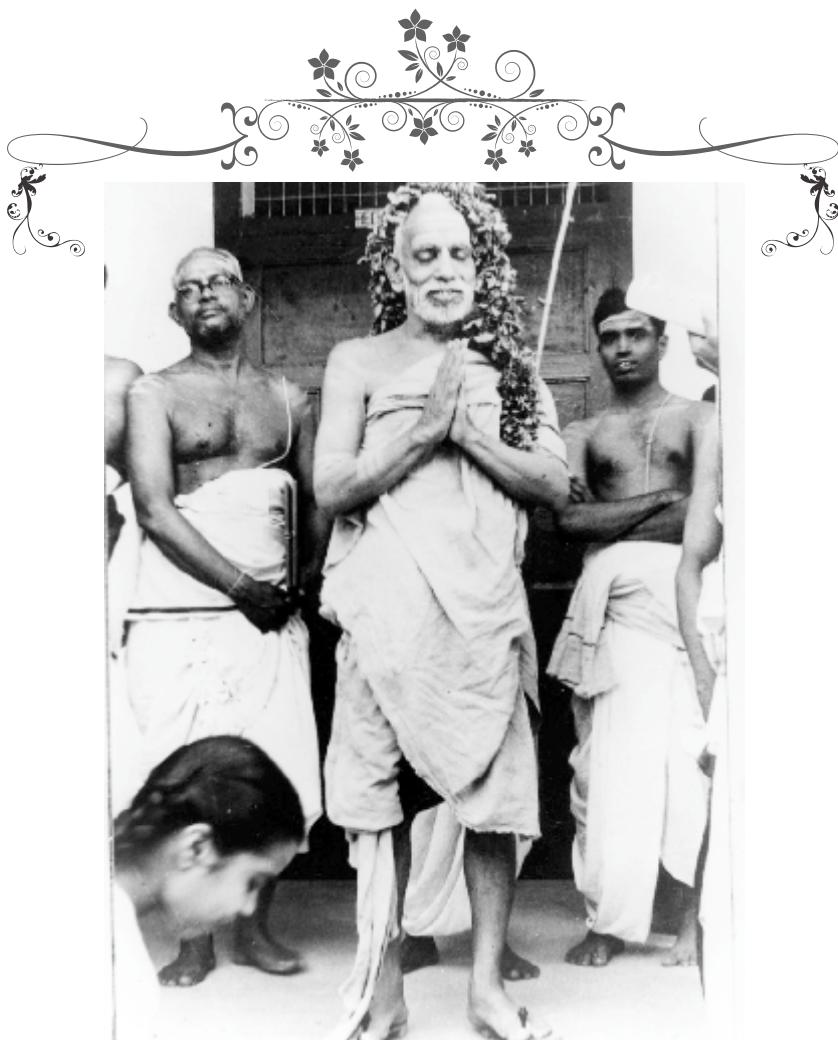
Incest rape cases have increased by 36.7% from 392 cases in 2012 to 536 cases in 2013 as compared to 35.2% increase in overall rape cases.

#### Rape victims

There were 33,764 victims of rape out of 33,707 reported rape cases in the country during the year 2013. 13.1% of the total victims of rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 26.3% were teenaged girls (14-18 years). 46.1% were women in the age-group 18-30 years.

## Incidence & rate of crime against women – Percentage change from 2003





The sastra expects women to be  
humble through their volition, and  
not through subjugation by others.  
And that is what I ask of them now.

*Parasakti*, there is a need too for men to engage in actions without remaining totally submissive. Just because they need not be totally submissive, it does not mean that they have the license to be extremely aggressive and haughty. Unfortunately, the situation is turning to be so. This is happening as a result of women, who are supposed to be more submissive than men, increasingly engaging themselves in manly pursuits, and as a consequence, the tendency of men in attempting to overtake them. As a cumulative effect of all this, violence, discontent, rivalry and strife are gaining strength in a nation like ours which is renowned for its *sattvika*. If the trend continues, the entire nation would turn a battlefield.<sup>14</sup>

It is in the hands of women to prevent such an outcome. Like how the boiling milk subsides at once as the fire-wood is pulled out from the oven, similarly, it is enough if they pull out themselves and stay submissive and the unbridled aggression of men will automatically subside, too. The country would not turn a battlefield and shall become a heaven. It is not just humility. All the special attributes associated with femininity as explained by me so far should flourish now. Only then, the country that is fast becoming a land of demons can be reined in. And it can be directed to the path that leads to peace, contentment and well-being. Those who codified the *dharma* for us had such a high outlook that women were the root of the tree called dharma. They have declared '*stree moolam sarva dharma*'. *Moolam* means root. If the root is healthy, then the whole tree will stay healthy, isn't it? Similarly, if women stay steady and fast in their dharma, men too would follow suit and the whole world will be firmly entrenched in the dharma. That is the need of the hour.

The aim is to retrieve the femininity that has been in existence in our country all along for thousands of years. If we protect it, that

would protect us in turn. The Mahabharata says '*Dharma rakshati rakshita*' - If one protects *dharma*, in turn *dharma* would protect him. Thus, if the *stree dharma*, which is part of the overall *dharma* meant for mankind, is protected and preserved by women, the *purusha dharma* (men's *dharma*) would also flourish. Thus *dharma* along with *kshema* (well-being) would flourish. This is what I tell them aiming at the welfare of the entire society.

I say: "Men have no such greatness which you do not have. In fact you are greater than them. In that case, why should you become like them? Instead of lowering yourselves, stand tall by yourselves."

Whatever be the state of affairs in other matters, women are getting involved in worshiping the *Paramatma* (the Ultimate Reality) in the form of a woman. Thus devotion to *Ambal* has been on the increase now. Only that *Ambal* needs to make women aware of the need of remaining feminine in soul and spirit, take pride in being so and protect, now and forever, the *streetva* (femininity) that has been alive with splendor all these years due to the *sastras* and *sampradaya*.



### PERIYAVA SARANAM



## Glossary

*Abhirami Antadi* - a famous Tamil poetic work by Abhirama Battar sung on *Ambal*

*achara = acharam* - custom, good behaviour, established rule of conduct

*Acharya* - a guru or a spiritual / philosophical mentor

Here it refers to the great Adi Sankara, who organised the prevalent six belief systems and established five *peethas* including the one at Kanchi to propagate Advaita school of thought.

*adharma* - unrighteousness, injustice, wickedness, immoral (opposite of *dharma*)

*adhikara purusha* - authorised person, official

*adhyayana* - study, learning, recital, repetition

*alakshmi karam* - opposite of *lakshmi karam*; inauspiciousness

*Ambal* - mother, good woman. *Ambal* is the Tamil form of Amba. It refers to *Parasakti*, the Universal Mother.

*anacharam* - opposite to *achara / acharam*

*anartha parampara* - a tradition or generation of nonsense and meaninglessness

*asasanam* - an ancient dress

*ashtaka* - consisting eight parts. Here, refers to one of the eight chapters of the Rig Veda.

*asura* - demon

*ativikartanam* - an ancient dress

*atma sreyas* - the ultimate good for the self / soul; desire for the ultimate good

*atman* - the self; the soul

*Bhagavata* - one of the greatest spiritual works of the Hindu tradition divined by Maharishi Vyasa; details the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu; considered to be the highest of all literary pieces ever written in India on the *bhaktimarga* (the spiritual way based on devotion to God); extols the story of Lord Krishna

*bhakti*- devotion to God

*bhakti sakti*- the divine power one gets out of his devotion to God

*Bharata Varsham*- the country called India

*Bharatiya*- Indian, belonging to India

*bhrukuti*- the portion of the forehead between the eyebrows

The path of yoga has identified certain important points of energy in the human body. They are called yoga chakras.

The yoga chakra referred to here is called the Ajna Chakra. It lies behind the *bhrukuti*.

*brahmachari* - a man in the first stage of life (i.e.) before marriage; a celibate, one who continuously marches along the path to merge with the Absolute

*Brahmavadini* - a woman exponent of the Veda; a woman who visualised Vedic hymns. Among them Lopamudra and Maitreyi are well-known.

*Brahmin* - one belonging to the priestly caste; one who has attained the Wisdom of the Absolute

*chandu* - a home-made black pigment used as *tilakam*; used as a long tear-drop line on the forehead.

*Chilappadikaram* - the magnum-opus in Tamil that deals with the story of Kovalan and Kannaki

*Chiranjeevi (m)*, *Chirayushi (f)* - one who lives long; used as a blessing; also used as a title like Mr., Mrs., etc.

*dana* - gift, donation; act of giving

*deeksha kala* - the period of religious observance

*deva* - god

*deva-asura sakti* - divine (*deva*) as well as demonic (*asura*) forces

*dharma* - Eternal Law; spiritual law; justice; righteousness; virtue; duty. (One cannot explain the Sanskrit word *dharma* containing all its connotations. However, all the meanings given above in toto may be taken into consideration.)

*dharmajna* - one who knows the dharma (*dharmajne* - is the vocative form (i.e.) used to address someone)

*dharma-peetha* - religious institution established to foster the principles of *dharma* and the philosophy of life (e.g.) Kanchi Sankara Mutt is a *dharma-peetha*.

*dharma-sastra* - a book on *dharma*, sacred laws or religious and social norms; a compilation of such rules

*dharmic*- (adj.) pertaining to *dharma*

*Dharmo rakshati rakshita*: - One who protects *dharma* is protected by *dharma*. This is a famous quote from the Mahabharata.

*dhavani*- half-sari

*Durga Suktam*- a Vedic hymn in praise of Goddess Durga

*Easwara Niyati*- natural order; the one ordained by the Almighty

*Gandhara* - an ancient Indian kingdom chiefly known for its invaluable contribution to the fields of art and sculpture

*Gita*- Srimad Bhagavad Gita

*gomaya*- cow-dung

*Gopika stree* - The cowherd women who lived in Gokulam. They are known for their staunch devotion to Sri Krishna. The *Bhagavata* describes the divine sports Sri Krishna indulged with them.

*griha*- house; home

*griha dharma* - household management; principles or rules regulating home management

*grihalakshmi*- the *Lakshmi* (auspiciousness) of the family

*griham*=*griha*

*grihapravesa*- house-warming ceremony

*grihastha* - a man in the second stage of life (i.e.) a married man; a householder

*grihvishnu* - the Vishnu (God) of the family (Periyava satirically remarks that man is not called *grihvishnu*, but woman is called *grihalakshmi*.)

*grihini*- housewife

*guru*- spiritual teacher; mentor

*Harappa* - Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro are the two popular archaeological excavation sites in the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation.

*hree* - shyness; modesty

*Hreemati* - modest woman; one of the names of Goddess Sakti

*Ilango Adigal* - the author of Chilappadikaram, a great Tamil literary classic which chronicles the life of *Kannaki*, an embodiment of chastity  
*itihasa* - history; chronicle; legend. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the only *itihasas*.

*Jagadguru* - the *guru* of the entire world

*jayanti* - birth anniversary

*jiva* - a soul; life; a living being; an individual person

*jnana-vairagya* - freedom from all worldly desires in search of the Supreme Knowledge

*jnani* - the Knower of Truth; one who has obtained the Supreme Knowledge

*Kali Purusha* - the personification of the Era called *Kali Yuga*

*Kali Yuga* - one of the four Eras; the Era of *adharma*

*Kalidasa* - a famous poet who lived more than 2000 years ago

*kalipravaham* - the force of *adharma* in the Era of Kali

*kanya* - a virgin

*kavya* - an epic

*keertan* - a lyric

*kesavisarjanam* - cutting and shaving; tonsuring the head

*kshatriya dharma* - the dharma of the kings

*kshema* - welfare; safety; peace

*kula stree* - a respectable or virtuous woman

*kulachara* - proper duty of a family or caste

*kumkum* - saffron powder (It is customary to apply *kumkum* on the forehead to mark auspiciousness.)

*lajja* - modesty; shyness

*Lakshmi* - Goddess of wealth; consort of Lord Vishnu

*Lakshmikaram* - auspiciousness; godliness

*lalitam* - elegance

*lungi* - a sarong-like garment mostly preferred by Muslims in India

*madhuryam* - sweetness; exquisite beauty; grace of style

*maha dosha* - severe fault

*maha papa* - severe sin; biggest crime

*maha pativrata* - a great woman of chastity and other noble virtues

*Mahalakshmi* - same as *Lakshmi* (maha - (adj.) high, great)

*Mahasakti* - Same as *Sakti* (maha - (adj.) high, great)

*Mahavishnu* - Lord Vishnu, the God of Protection

*mangalam* - auspiciousness

*Manimekhala* - the epic-poem that deals with the story of Manimekhala, the daughter of Madhavi

*mantra* - a Vedic hymn, an incantation, a sacred text

*mantra swarupam* - the subtle form of a deity being expressed in the form of a mantra

*Manu* - 1. Man par excellence or the representative man and father of the human race; words to denote 'man' such as 'manushya' (Sanskrit), 'manidhan' (Tamil) have their etymological roots in 'manu'.

2. *Manu* is one among the seers who compiled the *dharmastras*. His compilation is known as *Manu Dharma Sastra* or *Manu Smriti*. (Also see notes.)

*manushyatva* - the nature of being human

*Moodevi* - the Goddess of inauspiciousness; opposite of Sridevi

*namajapa* - a form of meditation in which a sacred incantation or God's name is chanted repeatedly

*nareemani* - 'Naree' means woman. 'Mani' means precious stone. The terms *nareemani* and *penmani* imply that women are precious.

*navamani* - the nine gem stones

*Navaratri* - the nine-day festival

*Nayak* - a dynasty

*Neeti Sastra* - an ancient book of *dharmastras*

*pancha pancha ushah kalam* - the time before dawn  
(roughly 3.30 to 5.30 a.m)

*papad* - a crispy, fried food item; a crunchy savoury; a side-dish

*Parabrahman* - the Absolute

*parama sowbhagyam* - highest auspiciousness

*Paramatma* - the Supreme spirit or *Parabrahman*

*Paramesvara* - Lord Siva

*paramottamam* - greatest

*Parasakti* - the Supreme Goddess; consort of Lord Siva

*parayana* - recital of any sacred text regularly and repeatedly

*paridanam* - the upper dress; female dress worn above the waist; the part of dress that guards the dignity of women

*pativrata* - a chaste and virtuous wife

*pativrata siromani* - the greatest of *pativratas*

*peetha* - a religious pedestal

*penmani* - 'Pen' means woman. 'Mani' means 'precious stone'.

*pourusha* - manliness

*praja-utpatti* - the act of begetting; the raising up of progeny

*prakriti* - Nature

*prakriti dharma* - divine rules of Nature

*prayashchitta* - a religious act to atone for a sin

*purana* - a tale of the past, ancient or legendary history

*purna* - fully; totally

*purna kesavisarjanam* - to shave the head fully; tonsure

*purusha* - man

*purusha dharma* - the *dharma* of man

*purusha shrushti dharma* - the *dharma* of man in Nature

*Purushasuktam* - *Suktam* is a kind of Vedic hymn. There are several *suktams* in the Vedas. *Purushasuktam* is one among them. It philosophically explains how the universe was created.

*raaga* - a musical tune

*rakshasa* - (m) demon

*rakshasi* - (f) demoness

*Ravana* - a demon killed by Lord Rama

*RigVeda* - one of the four Vedas

*rishi* - a sanctified sage, an ascetic

*Rukmini* - consort of Sri Krishna

*sabha* - a chamber, a hall

*sahasranama* - a thousand names

*sakha* - branch

*Saktam* - one of the six important belief systems; the belief system whose main deity is Sakti

*Sakti* - consort of Lord Siva

*Sakti Bejam* - the mystical letter symbolising the mantra of Goddess Sakti

*Sakuntalam* - a classic written by *Kalidasa*; the story of Sakuntala

*sampradaya* - tradition

*Samrajnee bhava* - words uttered by elders to bless the bride to mean 'Be the queen of the family'

*Samskritam* = Sanskrit - Tamil and Sanskrit are the most ancient languages of India.

*Sanatana Dharma* - the religion based on the Vedas; the eternal religion; Hindu religion

*sandhya vandanam* - the prayers offered during morning, noon and evening

*sangeetam* - music

*sankalpa* - purpose; determination; mental resolve

*sannyasi* - a mendicant, an ascetic

*Sardarini* - a woman belonging to the Sikh religion

*sastra virodham* - against the rules of the *dharma sastra*

*sastric* - (adj.) according to *dharma sastra*

*sattvika* - true, genuine; virtuous

*saukumaryam* - softness, delicacy, tenderness; youthfulness

*sishta* - a counsellor, a wise man, a learned man

*Sita* - wife of Lord Rama

*sloka* - a hymn or verse of praise

*Smaraye tvam na sikshaye* - Sita says to Rama, 'I am just reminding you (of what is already known to you) – not trying to teach you (something unknown to you) .'

*smriti*- traditional law; a code of laws, a law-book

*snehaya* - out of friendship and love

*Soundaryalahari* - a book written by Sri Adi Sankara in praise of Goddess Sakti

*Sowbhagyawati* - a blessed woman; an auspicious woman; a woman blessed with all sorts of wealth

*Sri*- Goddess Lakshmi

*sreyas*- virtue, religious merit

*stringara rasa* - the sentiment of love

*sruti*- a Vedic or sacred text

*stotra*- a hymn of praise; praise, eulogium

*stree dharma* - the *dharma* meant for women

*stree moolam sarva dharma*:- Woman is the root of all *dharma*.

*stree swadharma* - the natural disposition of women

*streetva / streetvam*- the femininity; quality or nature of woman

*sukta / suktam*- a form of Vedic hymn

*sumangali*- a woman whose husband is alive

*Surya Bhagwan*- the Sun-God

*swabhava* - nature

*swadharma*- one's own *dharma*; nature; natural disposition

*swechcha* - self-will, own inclination (usually, against law)

*taala* - beat or beating time in music

*Tamil* - Tamil and Sanskrit are the ancient language of India.

*taposakti*- the power obtained from one's penance

*tilaka dharanam* - to adorn the forehead with *tilakam*

*tilakam* - a mark made with sacred powders to adorn the forehead

*Trimurtis* - the trinity gods (i.e.) Brahma, the God of Creation, Vishnu, the God of Sustenance and Siva, the God of Destruction

*tyagi*- one who sacrifices; a selfless person

*udyogam purusha lakshanam* - A proverb that means the characteristic of man is to get employed and earn for the family.

*udyogam stree lakshanam* - Maha Periyava feels sorry at the present state of affairs where it seems that the characteristic of woman is to get employed and earn for the family.

*upadesa* - instruction, teaching, advice

*Upanishad* - a part of the holy Vedas; the book of wisdom

*upavasa* - to fast

*vadaham* - a food item; a side-dish

*vaidika* - a Brahmin well-versed in the Vedas

*Vaishnavism* = *Vaishnavam*- one of the six important belief systems; the belief system whose main deity is Vishnu

*varadakshina* - A present made to the bridegroom by the father of the bride. Though it referred to the offering made out of choice by the bride's family, gradually it has become a demand by the bridegroom's family and turned into a social evil.

*varaprasada* - a blessing; a divine gift (Here, Periyava refers to the great virtues of women as divine gifts.)

*Veda Dharma* - the religion based on the Vedas (i.e.) Hindu religion

*veena* - a stringed musical instrument

*Vinayaka* - Lord Ganesa; Remover of obstacles

*vrata* - a religious act of devotion or austerity, vowed observance; a vow in general

*yajna* - a sacrifice, a sacrificial rite

*yoga* - union with the Absolute; a path that leads towards Deliverance

*yoga sastra* - a school of thought; the philosophy that advocates deep meditation and concentration of the mind for Deliverance

*yoga siddha* - a wise man following the path of yoga; the person who is characterised by supernatural faculties

*yogasana* - a posture suited to abstract meditation (popularly known as 'yoga' nowadays)

*yuga* - an Age of the world; There are four yugas viz. Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali.



## Notes

*Maha Periyava* - The Tamil term 'Periyava' means 'the revered one'. Though it is a general term, it is specifically used to address the pontiff of a mutt (religious establishment) established by Sri Adi Sankara. 'Maha' means great. Though the term 'Maha Periyava' literally means 'a great person or a great pontiff', it specifically denotes His Holiness Chandra Sekharendra Swami of the Kanchi Mutt. He is considered to be an incarnation of Lord Siva.

*Deivattin Kural* - Deivattin Kural is a collection (7 volumes) of the speeches of Maha Periyava. Originally it was published in Tamil. English translation (Voice of God) is also available.

*Ra. Ganapati (Anna)* - A famous writer who has authored several books on spirituality. It is Sri. Ra. Ganapati, who compiled the Deivattin Kural.

Wrapper Pictures - First Wrapper: Kamakshi, a form of Goddess Uma, the consort of Lord Siva. Kamakshi is the presiding deity of the temple with which the Kanchi Mutt is associated.

Second Wrapper: His Holiness Jayendra Saraswati Swami, the successor of Maha Periyava.

Third Wrapper: His Holiness Vijayendra Saraswati Swami, the successor of HH Jayendra Saraswati.

At present, following the mahasamadhi (renouncing the physical body; demise) of Maha Periyava, the Mutt is being looked after by HH Jayendra Saraswati and HH Vijayendra Saraswati.

Fourth Wrapper: Maha Periyava

### 1. Arjuna

One of the Pandavas (in the Mahabharata). Here Periyava quotes Arjuna's conversation with Sri Krishna in the Bhagawad Gita.

### 2. Sivasakti-Aikyaroopini, Nataraja, Siva Natana Sakshi, Pancha Kritya Paramananda Tandavam

Pancha Kritya means 'the five divine acts'. It refers to the five acts of Lord Siva. They are related to the Creation and Destruction. The Nataraja idol being worshipped in temples is a symbolic representation of the five acts.

Sivasakti-Aikyaroopini denotes the form of Parasakti in which She appears to be merged with Lord Siva.

Siva Natana Sakshi – Parasakti, though the abode of all Power, conceals all the Power and resembles like a mute spectator of the dance of Siva. Though it is She who has Power, only Lord Siva does all the five acts through His cosmic dance.

### *3. Purusha Suktam, Sri, Sridevi, Bhoodevi, Mahalakshmi*

Suktam is a form of Vedic hymn. Purusha Suktam is one of the suktams. Purusha Suktam philosophically explains how the Creation was made. Of all the suktams Purusha Suktam is revered the most. One of the main reasons for this is that it is the only suktam that occurs twice in the Vedas.

Sridevi and Bhoodevi are the consorts of Mahavishnu. Sri means auspiciousness. It refers to Sridevi (also known as Mahalakshmi), the Goddess of auspiciousness. Bhoodevi is the Goddess of the Earth.

### *4. pranavam*

Pranavam refers to 'aum'. Aum or om is a divine sound. It consists of 'a', 'u' and 'ma'. Om is considered as the Seed (Beejam) of Creation.

Though the Absolute is formless, we worship the same in so many forms. Each form of the Absolute has countless names. It is customary to add the divine 'om' before each of these names while reciting. So, om is known as the 'beejaksharam' (the letter that represents the seed form of the Absolute).

However, there are other beejaksharams, too. Periyava speaks about the beejaksharam (Hreem) being used in the worship of Sakti. He points out that 'hree' means 'shyness'.

### *5. Tirukkural, aram, maram*

The Tirukkural is a Tamil book on the dharmastra. Aram means virtue (dharma). Maram is vice (the opposite of dharma).

Here Periyava quotes a verse from the Tirukkural which says: 'The ignorant say that love is an ally to virtue only, but it is also a help to get out of vice.'

Whenever something goes wrong, it can be set right only through love.

## *6. kolam*

Kolam is a design drawn on ground at the entrance of homes every day. During functions the inner floor of the house is also decorated with kolams.

## *7. gomaya, madi, acharam, unacharam*

In Vedic tradition cow is sacred. The products of cow are used extensively not only in worship but in so many household activities as well. One such is the use of gomaya (cow-dung) for floor cleaning. It has spiritual powers. It is also a powerful disinfectant. It has several other medicinal uses too.

It is customary to sprinkle cow-dung solution (water + cow-dung) at the entrance of a house both in mornings and evenings. Moreover, the floor of the house is regularly washed with cow-dung solution.

It is traditional to sit on floor while eating. After eating the place is cleansed with cow-dung solution.

Madi is physical purity. For example, cleansing the floor with cow-dung solution after every meal is an act of madi.

Acharam denotes all the acts done in accordance with the injunctions of sastras. Madi is a part of acharam. Unacharam is the opposite of acharam.

## *8. undi koduthor, uyir koduthorae*

A famous quote from the Tamil classic called 'Manimekhalai'. It means those who give food to others, give them life, verily.

Charity is the nucleus of the Hindu way of life. Of all the forms of charity, feeding others is considered the greatest. It is the duty of every householder to see to it that no living being (not only human beings) in their neighbourhood starves.

## *9. amavasya tarpanam, prarthana, sraddham, upanayanam*

Amavasya tarpanam is one of the nitya karmas. According to the sastras, a nitya karma refers to the rituals that have to be performed at periodic intervals. Not performing nitya karmas leads to sin. Tarpanam is a kind of sacred offering or oblation made to the deceased ancestors. It is done on certain days like the death anniversary, amavasya (the new moon day of every month), etc.

Prarthana means prayer. It also refers to any sacred vow, pledge or prayerful offering made to a god.

Sraddha means sincerity, firm faith, commitment. Sraddham refers to the ritual performed for one's ancestors, especially the deceased parents. Since the ritual has to be performed with utmost sincerity, it is called sraddham.

Upanayanam is the initiation ritual. It marks the beginning of brahmacharya, the period of celibacy as well as education. During the ceremony the celibate is initiated by his father with the Gayatri mantra. Mantra is a Vedic hymn. It is sacred. Mantras are for japa, meditative repetition. Gayatri is considered to be the highest of all mantras.

#### *10. easwara-sakshi*

God-conscience; a soul contract taken with an intellectual integrity.

#### *11. Theettu*

Theettu means unclean, unholy. Theettu can happen due to multiple factors – child birth, death of a family member or menstrual cycle. During the days of theettu, the concerned person should not have physical contact with anyone. He / she has to stay away from kitchen, prayer room, temples, etc. There are certain rituals done after the unholy days are over.

#### *12. sruti, smriti*

Sruti refers to the Vedas. Vedas are eternal. All the doctrines and faiths of India are based only on the Vedas.

Smriti refers to the dharmasastras, the laws developed by sages. Smriti is based on the experience of the sages by practising the sruti.

#### *13. Yantra*

A yantra is a mystical diagram. Yantras possess spiritual powers. They are used in place of (or along with) idols in regular worship. However, there are certain other yantras which have occult powers. Such yantras are used in black magic.

#### *14. sattvika*

Even though there is no single word equivalent in the English language for the word guna, it approximately means quality; however depending on the context it could also mean string, thread or strand, virtue, merit,

excellence, attribute and property. Sattva (goodness), rajas (action) and tamas (darkness) are the three gunas in everybody and everything in varying proportions. (Sattvika is the adjective of sattva.)

#### *15. NCC, namaskaram, darsan*

NCC (the National Cadet Corps) is the Indian military cadet corps open to school and college students on voluntary basis.

Namaskaram is the Hindu way of paying obeisance.

Darsan is an occasion of seeing a holy person or the image of a deity. Hindus attach great importance to namaskaram and darsan. Both these have philosophical significance too.

#### *16. Kali, Kali Purusha, Kalipravaham*

Kali is the last Era in the life-span of the Earth.

The physical and moral strength of men erode gradually. During the Era of Kali, the morality will be very low.

All sorts of behaviour against dharma will be celebrated. Acts of adharma will flow like a flood. This is referred to as Kalipravaham.

Kali Purusha is the personification of Kali.

#### *17. Dandakaranya, vanavas, Kishkindha, Sugriva, Anjaneya*

These are from the Ramayana. Sri Rama and his wife Sita go on a vanavas (exile). They stay in forests. Dandakaranya is the name of a forest where they stay. While at Dandakaranya, some sages approach Rama and request him to protect them from demons. Sri Rama assures them of help. Sita objects to it. Periyava quotes from the conversation between them regarding this.

In the forest, Sita is abducted by a demon called Ravana. He carries her through the sky. Sita tears a piece of cloth from her upper garment, bundles all her jewels in it and throws it on ground. She feels that this may serve as a pointer to Sri Rama to show the route by which she has been carried. The bundle falls in Kishkindha.

Sugriva is a monkey king. His army finds the jewels and hands over the same to him. Having lost Sita, Rama starts searching for her. On his way he comes to Kishkindha and befriends Sugriva. He shows the jewels to Rama.

Anjaneya, the minister of Sugriva, goes in search of Sita and finds her in Asokavana, a garden in the kingdom of Ravana. While Anjaneya introduces himself to Sita as a representative of Sri Rama, he mentions about the episode of jewels.

Kishkindha kanda, Sundara kanda are names of chapters in the Ramayana.

#### *18. dhoti, angavastra, tritheeya vastra*

Dhoti is the traditional Indian attire of men worn as antareeya i.e. below the waist

Angavastra is the traditional Indian attire of men worn as uttareeya i.e. above the waist

Titheeya vastra means third garment. Besides those worn below and above the waist, men had a third garment too.

#### *19. Parasurama, Kerala, mlechcha*

Parasurama is an incarnation of Lord Mahavishnu. He is one among the immortals. He made the sea recede and thus the land of Kerala was formed. Following the instructions of Parasurama some families from the middle regions of India went and got settled there.

Mlechcha is an outcast. It also denotes a foreigner.

Parasurama developed special rules and norms for the inhabitants of the newly formed society. He did it intentionally so that the people of India would treat those of Kerala as outcasts. The intention of Parasurama was not to ill-treat the people, rather, to safeguard certain privileges. If they mingled with the rest of the society, the privileges would be lost.

Here Periyava reminds us of the intentions of Parasurama. He says since the rules of Kerala were made with a special purpose, they should not be considered as general rules.

#### *20. akshauhini, Draupadi, Dussasan, Kaurava, Pandava*

The Mahabharata talks about the great war at Kurukshetra. The war broke out between Kauravas (the 100 sons of King Dhrutarashtra) and Pandavas (the 5 sons of Pandu). Dussasan, one of the Kauravas, humiliated Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. Besides other reasons, this humiliation formed the main cause of the war.

An akshauhini is a large body of organized troops. According to the Mahabharata, an akshauhini consists of 21,870 chariots; 21,870 elephants; 65,610 cavalry and 109,350 infantry.

### *21. braid, band, pichoda, tuft, jatamudi*

All these are about hair. It is inauspicious to leave the hair loose. It is customary that a girl or woman divides her hair into two portions from the front by way of combing. The hair thus split into two halves will be intertwined to form a beautiful braid. Even after forming the braid there will be some hairs protruding at the bottom. A cloth ribbon or band will be used to cover the protruding hairs. Pichoda is another approach where the braided hair is bundled beautifully as a crest. Kanya (girls) and sumangali (married woman whose husband is alive) should not cut short their hair.

Tuft is for men. Men have to regularly get their hair cut short. They should tonsure the front portion of their head. The hair at the rear end should be bundled and tied so that no hair protrudes. This is known as tuft.

Those in the yoga marga don't get their hair cut-short. Most of them don't care about their hair. However, some of them make it sticky and bundle it as a crown. It is known as jatamudi.

Rishis of the ancient times also had jatamudis.

### *22. simanta, vakidu, tilakam, tilaka dharanam*

Simanta and vakidu are the same. Simanta is the place on the upper edge of the forehead wherfrom the hair is divided into two halves to form a braid.

Tilakam is a holy mark made on certain parts of the body. Tilaka dharanam means 'to wear a tilakam'.

Women use kumkum as tilakam. It is worn on the forehead between the eyebrows. Sumangalis have to wear kumkum on their simanta as well.

### *23. samsara bandha naasam, saranagati*

Samsara refers to worldly life. Bandha is bondage. Samsara bandha thus denotes the bond established by the soul with the world. Naasam is to end.

Saranagati means 'surrender'. It refers to the process of total surrender to God, teacher or husband.

The deeds performed by the soul form the cause of this bondage. The soul is born and reborn continually to experience the fruits of his good and bad actions. It is jnana or the Supreme Knowledge that delivers the soul from the birth-death-rebirth cycle. The Supreme Knowledge is the highest goal of life.

Periyava says while man has to follow rigorous austerities, surrender himself to a guru and learn the Supreme Knowledge from him, the same is easily obtained by woman by just surrendering herself to her husband.

#### *24. Anjaneya, Yama, Trimurtis, Kannaki, Sita, Agni*

Here Maha Periyava recalls some anecdotes from the hoary past.

Once Nalayini's husband was cursed by a sage to lose his life by the next dawn. Immediately, Nalayini implored the Sun not to rise. The Sun-God obeyed her diktat. Then on the request of all gods, the sage withdrew his curse. And, Nalayini permitted the Sun to rise.

Savitri, on the death of Satyavan, her husband, requested Yama, the God of Death, to give his life back. Yama implicitly obeyed. Satyavan got his life back.

Once, the Trinity Gods (Vishnu, Siva, Brahma) came to test the chastity of Anasuya. Having understood their intentions, she sprinkled holy water on them and at once they turned into babies.

In the Ramayana, the army of Ravana tied to the tail of Anjaneya several pieces of oily cloth and set fire to them. Mother Sita prayed to Agni, the God of Fire, not to cause harm to Anjaneya. He obeyed and thus Anjaneya was not affected by the fire.

Kovalan was mistaken for a thief and sentenced to death by the king of Madurai. On hearing the news of the injustice meted out to her husband, Kannaki, the wife of Kovalan, in a fit rage cursed that the entire city of Madurai be consumed to flames. And the city was burnt down by Agni, the Lord of Fire.

#### *25. Tiruvalluvar, Varuna*

Here, Periyava cites a poem from the Tirukkural, a Tamil book on dharmasastras. The poem says: "If a chaste woman orders so, the God of Rain obliges and showers rain at once."

## *26. Thataka, avatara, Visvamitra*

This is an episode from the Ramayana. Sri Rama is an incarnation (avatara) of Lord Vishnu. Sri Rama accompanies sage Visvamitra to forest where several sages spend their lives contemplating upon the Divine. On their way a demoness called Thataka attacks them. Visvamitra asks Sri Rama to kill her. Rama hesitates. For, one of the primordial duties of men is to protect the women folk. But Visvamitra says, 'The dharmic rule considered by you is not proper. She is not a woman. She is a demon. So it is the duty of a king like you to kill her and protect humanity.' Obeying the sage Sri Rama kills her.

## *27. Dandakaranya*

The name of a forest. This is an episode from the Ramayana.

## *28 Saptapadi*

Saptapadi means 'seven steps'. It is one of the most important rituals and is of immense significance in a Hindu wedding ceremony. In the seven steps, the bride and groom circumambulate a consecrated fire seven times, reciting specific vows. In Vedic tradition, vows made in the presence of agni (fire) are considered unbreakable.

## *30. Veda, Veda Adhyayana, Veda mantra ashirvachanam*

Vedas are eternal. They exist in wave form. They were visualised by seers. The seers expressed them in the form of mantras. Veda mantras should not be written down. They can only be chanted and heard. The process of chanting is called adhyayana.

Veda mantras are used extensively not only in all auspicious ceremonies but in day to day life as well. One such example is the use of mantras while blessing. The Vedic phrases or mantras used in blessing are called Veda mantra ashirvachanam.

## *31. Uma-Mahesvar, Gowri-Sankar, Lakshmi-Narayan, Sita-Ram, Radha-Krishna*

All these are names of male gods. The first part of each name is the name of the consort of the respective god. For example, Uma is the consort of Mahesvar.

### *32. sumangali prarthana, Navaratri, suvasini puja, tamboolam*

The Hindu dharma has always considered the blessings of ancestors as important for the happiness and well-being of the future generations. No important function in a family is considered complete without invoking the blessings of the ancestors.

A sumangali is a married woman living with her husband. Sumangali Prarthana is the worship of those ancestors of the family who remained sumangalis till their end. It is essentially a function of, for and by the women and is performed to invoke the blessings of the departed sumangalis of the family. It is performed a week or fortnight before auspicious occasions like weddings.

Navaratri is a festival dedicated to the worship of Goddess Durga. The word 'navaratri' means 'nine nights'. During Navaratri, nine forms of Goddess Sakti are worshiped. Navaratri is an important major festival and is celebrated all over India. It is customary to arrange 'kolu' during these days. Kolu is a display of dolls. This festival promotes, encourages and fosters aesthetics and social skills among women. Navaratri is the longest Hindu festival and is dedicated entirely to women.

Suvasini puja is the worship of a kanya (virgin) or a sumangali. Kanyas and sumangalis are considered the manifestation of Goddess Sakti.

One of the most important puja items in Hindu rituals is the betel leaf. It is known as tamboolam. Tamboolam and kumkum (usually along with cloth) are offered as a mark of respect to guests. Periyava says that this practice is meant only for women – not for men. 'This being the case, wherefrom come the question of male chauvinism?' he asks.

### *33. Yer pidithavan enna seivaan? Paanai pidithaval bhagyam*

This is a Tamil proverb. 'Yer pidithavan' means the man who holds the plough. It refers to the husband. 'Paanai pidithaval' means 'the woman who carries the pot'. It refers to the wife. The proverb means that the well-being of a family does not depend on the work or earnings of the husband, but only due to the happiness and welfare of the wife.

### *34. illaal, illaan, illakkizhathi, illam, illaththarasi*

'Illam' is a Tamil word. It means 'home'. The word illam is from the root 'il'. The root-word 'il' has two meanings. One is 'home'. The other is 'nothing'. Illaan (masculine), illaal (feminine) are both derived from 'il'.

Here Periyava sarcastically compares these two derivatives: the feminine form 'illaal' denotes 'the head of home'; but the masculine form 'illaan' means 'a pauper – one who owns nothing'. Illakkizhathi and illatharasi - (feminine gender) mean the head or queen of the family.

### *35. Manu Dharma Sastra, Neeti Sastra*

Dharma is eternal. It is something inherent in the Creation. Every living being follows its own course in accordance with dharma. But man is endowed with intellect (buddhi) which allows him to reason. So he gets distracted from dharma and starts acting on his own (swechcha = driven by one's own desires) as directed by his intellect. Since his course is not compatible with that of Nature, his life is full of inconsistencies and miseries.

However, our ancestors, with their spiritual powers, have construed dharma. But dharma is abstract and cannot be explained. One can only realise it within. That's why they have developed various laws. Dharma expressed in the form of laws or rules is known as sastra (law).

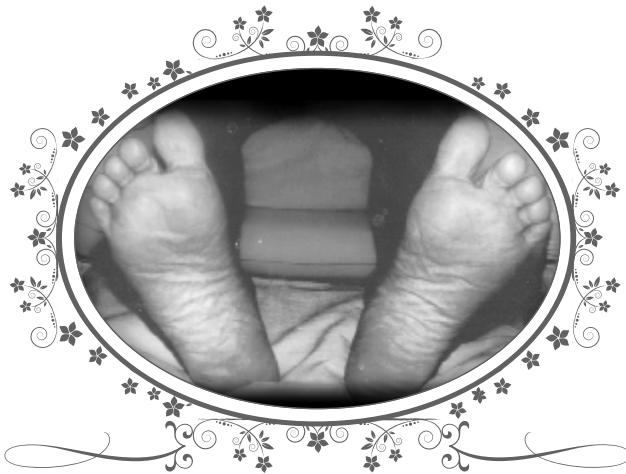
Manu Dharma Sastra and Neeti Sastra are some of our ancient books of sastras.

## For Notes

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## PERIYAVA SARANAM

Soshanam bhavsindhoscha jyapanam saarsampada:  
Guro: padodakam samyak tasmai sri gurave nama:

(Even by the very sipping of the charanamrita (the water with which the feet of guru are washed), we get blessed by the eternal wealth (of liberating knowledge), and which dries up the endless ocean of seeking and the subsequent sorrows.

My Salutations to the lotus-feet of that glorious guru.)